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probably the bureaucratic politics model. Entrenched bureaucracies, fighting hard to enhance (or at least maintain) their policy and budgetary positions, are the norm." He then provides a useful thumbnail sketch of the relevant chiefs and other players. (pp. 196–98)

101. Jonathan Daniels, *Frontier on the Potomac* (New York: Macmillan, 1946), pp. 31–32.
102. This proposition was originally formulated by Ernest May. It is similar to Kingdon's concept of the policy window, discussed earlier in the chapter.
103. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, chap. 3.
104. A classic illustration of international and intranational reticence is Neustadt's Skybolt study for President Kennedy, cited earlier.
105. Dean Acheson, "The President and the Secretary of State," in Don Price, ed., *The Secretary of State* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1960).

6

The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Third Cut

"The fourteen people involved were very significant—bright, able, dedicated people, all of whom had the greatest affection for the U.S. . . . If six of them had been President of the U.S., I think that the world might have been blown up."¹ Whether or not Robert Kennedy was right, his remark reminds us that the men (and they were all men) advising President Kennedy differed sharply about what should be done. Given the difficulty of the challenge they confronted and the differences in their jobs and backgrounds, who should expect otherwise? That each fought hard for the course of action he judged best for the nation should not be surprising. With nuclear war in the offing, should anyone expect less?

Historians of great events tend to obscure differences among government leaders and to miss the gaps between these individuals' reasonable, competing recommendations and the chosen course of action. In retrospect, whatever is finally chosen generally seems the only appropriate choice—especially if events turn out successfully. Advocates of alternatives that were rejected are inclined to be less vocal. To many historians, the notion that events of great consequence should turn on ephemeral details like who was in the room or how effectively someone played the game appears radically disproportionate. But as Robert Kennedy's remark reminds us, judgments about how the U.S. should respond to Soviet missiles in Cuba covered the spectrum from doing nothing to launching a surprise strike on Cuba followed by an invasion. An understanding of why, on October 24, 1962, the United States was blockading Cuba (rather than invading or ignoring it) thus requires careful attention not only to the arguments for that course of action but also to the essentially political process by which the blockade emerged as the American government's choice.

Once it discovered ballistic missiles in Cuba, the American government organized its crisis decisionmaking around an informally selected inner circle of advisers that met either at the White House or

FIGURE 1

The Inner Circle: October 16–27, 1962

Dean Acheson, retired secretary of state (meetings at State on Oct. 17, 19; met separately with JFK on Oct. 18)

George Anderson, chief of Naval Operations and member of the JCS (White House meetings on Oct. 19, 21–22)

George Ball, under secretary of state (almost all meetings)

Charles Bohlen, ambassador to France; had just ended duty as ambassador-at-large for Soviet affairs (meetings at State on Oct. 16–17; met separately with JFK on Oct. 16)

McGeorge Bundy, special assistant to the president for national security affairs (almost all)

Marshall Carter, deputy director of Central Intelligence Agency (Oct. 16 only)

C. Douglas Dillon, secretary of the treasury (almost all)

Roswell Gilpatric, deputy secretary of defense (almost all)

Roger Hilsman, assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research (Oct. 22, possibly others)

U. Alexis Johnson, deputy undersecretary of state for political affairs (almost all)

Lyndon Johnson, vice president (almost all)

John F. Kennedy, president (White House meetings only)

Robert Kennedy, attorney general (almost all)

Curtis LeMay, chief of staff of the Air Force and member of the JCS (White House meetings on Oct. 19, 22)

Robert Lovett, former secretary of defense and undersecretary of state (met separately with JFK on Oct. 18; White House meetings on Oct. 20–24)

Arthur Lundahl, director of CIA's National Photographic Interpretation Center (almost all, at least in part)

Edwin Martin, assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs (all except White House meeting of Oct. 26)

John McCloy, former envoy to West Germany and assistant secretary of war (White House meeting of Oct. 26)

John McCone, director of Central Intelligence (almost all from Oct. 17)

Edward McDermott, director of the Office of Emergency Preparedness (Oct. 22–23, possibly others)

Robert McNamara, secretary of defense (all)

Paul Nitze, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs (almost all from Oct. 19)

Kenneth O'Donnell, special assistant to the president (Oct. 22, possibly others)

David Ormsby-Gore, British ambassador to the United States (meetings with JFK and others from Oct. 21)

Walt Rostow, counselor of the state department and chair of State's Policy Planning Council (all from Oct. 24)

Dean Rusk, secretary of state (all except White House evening meeting of Oct. 18)

David Shoup, commandant of the Marine Corps and member of the JCS (White House meetings on Oct. 19, 22)

Theodore Sorensen, special counsel to the president (almost all)

Adlai Stevenson, permanent representative to the United Nations (met separately with JFK on Oct. 16; White House meetings of Oct. 20–21, 26)

FIGURE 1. Continued

Maxwell Taylor, chairman of JCS, had just ended duty as president's military representative (all)

Llewellyn Thompson, ambassador-at-large, had just ended duty as ambassador to the Soviet Union (almost all except White House meetings on Oct. 16 and evening of Oct. 18)

Earle Wheeler, chief of staff of the Army and member of the JCS (White House meetings on Oct. 19, 22)

Donald Wilson, acting director of the U.S. Information Agency (almost all from Oct. 21)

Note: President Kennedy designed and privately presented 34 individuals with silver commemorative calendars displaying the month of October 1962, highlighting the dates between October 16 and 28. In addition to almost all the individuals mentioned above, Kennedy presented the calendars to his wife, Jacqueline; his press secretary, Pierre Salinger; and his private secretary, Evelyn Lincoln. Robert Kennedy's own, highly subjective list of those in the inner circle included, aside from the president and himself, only (in alphabetical order) Acheson, Ball, Bundy, Dillon, Gilpatric, Alexis Johnson, Lovett, Martin, McCone, McNamara, Nitze, Rusk, Sorensen, Taylor, and Thompson.

at the State Department from October 16 through October 19. This process assumed a more regular, formal quality in successive meetings of the National Security Council on October 20, 21, and 22. The decisionmakers then narrowed again, to an inner circle, designated as the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, also known as the "ExCom." They met at the White House for the duration of the crisis (with subcommittees meeting elsewhere). After the crisis the ExCom continued to operate on other issues through the remainder of the Kennedy administration.

The participants in the first circle of American decisionmakers are listed in Figure 1. The list is inclusive, naming everyone who actively participated in crisis deliberations at the White House.

A comparable list cannot be drawn up with equal confidence for the Soviet Union, but a preliminary sketch is offered in Figure 2.² The Soviet team differed from the Americans in at least three obvious ways. First, the Soviet group more closely reflects the regular national security decisionmaking apparatus, centered on the governing Presidium, with no retired officials or other unexpected additions. Second, the Soviet group is smaller. As in the American case, it includes all those individuals we believe actively participated in Kremlin deliberations. But the actual participation was probably even narrower, reflecting Khrushchev's more dominant role. Third, the

FIGURE 2

Key Soviet Decision Makers: October 16–28, 1962

Leonid Brezhnev, chairman of the Supreme Soviet and member of the Presidium
 Andrei Gromyko, minister of foreign affairs
 Nikita Khrushchev, first secretary of the Party Central Committee, chairman of the Council of Ministers and chairman of the Presidium
 Andrei Kirilenko, first deputy chairman of the Central Committee Bureau for the Russian Republic and member of the Presidium
 Aleksei Kosygin, first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and member of the Presidium
 Frolov Kozlov, secretary of the Central Committee and member of the Presidium
 Otto Kuusinen, secretary of the Central Committee and member of the Presidium
 Vasily Kuznetsov, first deputy minister of foreign affairs
 Rodion Malinovsky, minister of defense
 Anastas Mikoyan, first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and member of the Presidium
 Nikolai Podgorniy, first secretary of the Ukrainian Party and member of the Presidium
 Dimitri Polyansky, chairman of the Russian Republic's Council of Ministers and member of the Presidium
 Boris Ponomarev, secretary of the Central Committee responsible for liaison with nonbloc Communist parties
 Vladimir Semichastny, chairman of the State Committee for Security (KGB)
 Aleksandr Shelepin, secretary of the Central Committee for party control (party discipline), deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and chair of that council's committee for state control (police, law)
 Gennadi Voronov, first deputy chairman of the Central Committee Bureau for the Russian Republic and member of the Presidium
 Nikolai Shvernik, chairman of the Central Committee's Party Commission and member of the Presidium
 Mikhail Suslov, secretary of the Central Committee and member of the Presidium
 Matvei Zakharov, chief of the general staff of the armed forces and First Deputy Minister of Defense

Soviet decisionmakers were principally officials with broad responsibilities for domestic governance. Few had foreign or defense policy expertise and there is little evidence that career diplomats or uniformed military officers participated at all.

Because of the centrality of this crisis to the presidency of John Kennedy, evidence about what members of the U.S. government were seeing, doing, and even thinking is much greater than for most events. With the publication of the secret tapes from the crisis, and most of the classified documents, one can document the perceptions and preferences of individual players with more confidence than usual. Unfortunately, even with the new evidence about the Soviet side of

this equation, the Soviet decision process in deploying missiles to Cuba or withdrawing them remains more opaque.

THE IMPOSITION OF A BLOCKADE BY THE UNITED STATES

The Politics of Discovery

The American government's choice to mount a blockade cannot be understood apart from the context in which the necessity for choice arose. First, consider the timing of the discovery. Though Robert Kennedy reported that a government postmortem on the crisis concluded "there was no action that the U.S. could have taken before we actually did act," this judgment is incorrect (and Kennedy's recollection is incomplete).³ Had a U-2 flown over the western end of Cuba two or three weeks earlier, it could have discovered the missiles, allowing the administration more time to consider alternatives and to act before the danger of operational missiles in Cuba became a major factor in the equation.⁴ Had the missiles not been discovered until two weeks later, blocking additional arms shipments to Cuba would have been futile, since the Soviet missile shipments would have been completed, including delivery of the IRBMs. Moreover, all the MRBMs would have been ready for action.

The "face" of the Cuban issue to American governmental officials formed a second crucial feature of the context. What the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba meant to each individual depended on positions taken in earlier policy debates, both within the administration and before the country. A series of overlapping bargaining games determined both the *date* of the discovery of the Soviet missiles and the *impact* of the discovery on the administration. An explanation of the politics of the discovery is consequently a considerable piece of the explanation of why the U.S. chose the blockade.

Cuba was the Kennedy administration's "political Achilles' heel."⁵ This vulnerability stemmed from three related causes. First, the failed attempt to overthrow Castro in the Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961 raised the most serious internal doubts about the president's judgment, the wisdom of his advisers, and the quality of their advice. No subsequent major issue of national security was decided without bringing Robert Kennedy and Theodore Sorensen into the process. When the president referred to Cuba as his "heaviest political cross," he referred to the inside of his administration as well as to the outside.⁶ Second, the Bay of Pigs catastrophe had taught the public

unfortunate lessons: that Cuba constituted a serious threat to U.S. security and that calls for the overthrow of Castro's Communism had legitimacy. Third, the failure of the invasion had made Kennedy appear indecisive. After attempting to overthrow Castro with a clandestine force but bungling the job, the president and his advisers were left feeling an even greater obligation to be decisive in the next case. On the first day of crisis deliberations, Kennedy observed that the Soviet missile deployment "shows the Bay of Pigs was really right. We'd got it right." General Taylor replied, "I'm a pessimist, Mr. President. We have a war plan over there for you. [It] calls for a quarter of a million American soldiers, Marines, and airmen to take an island we launched 1,800 Cubans against, a year and a half ago. We've changed our evaluations. Well . . ." Taylor left the rest unsaid.⁷

The Republican Party grabbed the administration by this vulnerability. The months preceding the Cuban missile crisis were also months before the off-year congressional elections, and the Republican Senatorial and Congressional Campaign Committee had announced that Cuba would be "the dominant issue of the 1962 campaign."⁸ What the administration billed as a "more positive and indirect approach of isolating Castro from the developing, democratic Latin America," Senators Kenneth Keating (R-N.Y.), Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), Homer Capehart (R-Ind.), Strom Thurmond (D-S.C.), and others attacked as a "do-nothing" policy.⁹ In contrast to the administration's inaction, which was allowing additional Soviet arms shipments to Cuba, critics called for a blockade, an invasion, or simply "action." The idea of blockading Cuba had acquired, for Kennedy administration insiders, the stigma of having a "certain Capehartian ring to it." This was why, after choosing a type of blockade option on October 20, Kennedy walked out on the balcony of the White House with a few aides and remarked sardonically, "Well, I guess Homer Capehart is the Winston Churchill of our generation."¹⁰

The previous year the Kennedy administration had set in motion a secret CIA program, Operation Mongoose, aimed at undermining Castro's rule in Cuba. Even more secretly, CIA operatives were attempting to assassinate Castro. They never came close. Nor was Mongoose making much progress. Led by McCone, the CIA pressed to expand the U.S. sponsorship of guerrilla operations, and sought presidential commitment to support the efforts, if necessary, with an American invasion of Cuba. Such a commitment was considered indispensable by the Cuban refugees. Yet President Kennedy steadfastly refused to make any such commitment, and said so privately to the leader of the Cuban exiles.¹¹

As spring of 1962 turned to summer, the Mongoose program and other U.S. efforts aimed at Cuba were reaching a crossroads. The military had prepared contingency plans for invading or for blockading Cuba; the blockade was then conceived as a way to retaliate if the Soviets moved to cut off West Berlin.¹² Mongoose itself had become too big to ignore, while still too weak to have much chance of unseating Castro. The covert program had gathered intelligence, but little else. Even if Mongoose helped spark an internal revolt, some U.S. officials (especially at State and the White House) were fearful that the revolt might so entangle the American government that Washington would be sucked into an invasion of Cuba. For them, Mongoose had to be kept within clear limits. As early as March 1962, Robert Kennedy had also called attention to the possibility that the Soviet government might establish a base in Cuba that would rule out any U.S. invasion and pose new dangers.¹³

In July 1962, the small interdepartmental group running Mongoose (chaired by Robert Kennedy) judged that Phase I of Mongoose had run its course. The group began a complete review of the program's future, with options ranging from accepting Cuba as a Soviet ally and containing it, on the one hand, to provoking an attack as an excuse for an American invasion, on the other. The options were presented to Robert Kennedy's "Special Group (Augmented)" on August 10.¹⁴ The CIA's operational representatives wanted to stimulate a revolt, but recognized the rebels would have to be backed by an American invasion. State's representatives (supported by the work of the CIA's analytical wing) wrote bluntly that: "It should be recognized at the outset that short of the employment of U.S. military force, the programs and actions of the U.S. aimed at the downfall of the Castro government will probably be only marginal." State was inclined to stay with the limited status quo and "avoid engaging U.S. prestige openly in operations, the success of which may be doubtful."¹⁵

This was the context, then, of prior positions and attitudes as reports began to stream in about Soviet shipments of conventional arms and military advisers to Cuba. Mongoose program director Edward Lansdale had called the State Department on August 10 to see if the paper evaluating the Soviet base contingency that Robert Kennedy had speculated about months earlier had been completed. It had not. A State official privately reminded his colleagues that "you will recall that it was decided that the possibility was too remote to waste time on."¹⁶ At the August 10 meeting, however, McCone raised a warning flag not only about a Soviet base, but about Soviet deployment of ballistic missiles to Cuba. Nevertheless, the Mongoose review

turned out about the way State had wanted: a stepped up "Course B" that added a little more harassment, but no new commitments to overthrow Castro. Officials admitted to each other that they did not expect the intended actions to produce Castro's downfall.¹⁷

As the reports of arms shipments piled higher, McCone used them in the Mongoose group to press his case for much more vigorous covert action against Cuba. Moreover, during a meeting that President Kennedy attended on August 23, McCone reinforced his argument by warning of the possible deployment of nuclear missiles. The meeting on August 23 turned into the first high-level deliberation on how to respond if Soviet missiles were found in Cuba.¹⁸ In this decision setting, McCone was in the role of a policy advocate for more aggressive covert action against Castro. Since his policy position was unpopular (Robert Kennedy was McCone's only, half-hearted, ally), the CIA director's warnings about missiles were seen as part of his advocacy of attacking Castro. So officials who disagreed with McCone on Mongoose also discounted his missile warnings. Bundy, for example, deflected McCone with the argument that an attack on Cuba might cause a response in Berlin. Others feared a reaction against American Jupiter missiles in Turkey. Pressing his case, McCone downplayed the Turkey danger. He said the missiles in Turkey were useless and ought to be withdrawn. McNamara agreed they were useless, but said it was difficult politically to remove them.

Kennedy was plainly worried about McCone's predictions about Soviet missiles in Cuba. He wanted more study of the danger, and possible countermoves. He signed National Security Action Memorandum (NSAM) 181, which directed McNamara to identify ways to get the Jupiter missiles out of Turkey, asked for a broad analysis of the threat that might be posed by Soviet ballistic missiles in Cuba, and ordered review of two major policy options. One option was diplomatic, a warning to the Soviets. The other was military, a study of alternative ways of eliminating "any installations in Cuba capable of launching nuclear attack on the U.S." Kennedy also wanted an analysis of the pros and cons of invading Cuba "in the context of an aggravated Berlin crisis."¹⁹

McCone occupied an odd place within the Kennedy administration. Trained as an engineer, he was a businessman who had made a fortune, first as a steel executive and then with construction and engineering firms that built factories and merchant ships, filling huge orders during World War II. A lifelong Republican, during the Eisenhower administration McCone had served as chairman of the powerful Atomic Energy Commission. Politically very conservative

and an ardent Roman Catholic, McCone was fiercely anti-Communist. Within the Eisenhower administration, he had opposed proposals to negotiate a ban on atomic testing. After the Bay of Pigs, when CIA Director Allen Dulles was pushed out, Kennedy chose McCone as a politically safe replacement. McCone's vocal policy views had made enemies among Democrats, but Kennedy rightly judged that McCone would be a capable manager, able to understand and handle the CIA's burgeoning development of technical intelligence. McCone also became the president's personal link to former President Eisenhower and came to be a personal friend of Robert Kennedy.²⁰ His friendship with Robert Kennedy proved important during the crisis.

Opinionated and stony where his predecessor had been amiable and witty, McCone was disliked, even mistrusted, by other Kennedy administration insiders, Robert Kennedy excepted. Whatever his faults, McCone was disciplined and smart. He reasoned that the Soviets could only be deploying such a comprehensive surface-to-air missile (SAM) system if they intended to protect more vital assets, such as ballistic missiles. At the same August 10 meeting where he warned of Soviet missiles in Cuba, McCone was shocked when McNamara alluded to the possibility of assassinating Castro. Then and later, McCone quashed any discussion of such schemes on moral as well as practical grounds. "I could get excommunicated," he affirmed without a wink. (On this matter McCone was bypassed, and the necessary authority and supervision apparently came directly from Robert Kennedy.)²¹

Each week seemed to bring more worrisome news. The Republican critics in Congress smelled blood. Soviet SAM sites were firmly identified. To control leaks President Kennedy instructed the CIA to restrict that information to only a few officials, put it in a special box, "and nail it tight."²² The CIA proposed low-level reconnaissance flights over Cuba by military aircraft to get further information. The recommendation was viewed with suspicion by some who presumed McCone might be seeking a provocation for American military action against Cuba.

Still opposed to McCone, Bundy urged President Kennedy to make a public statement saying that he knew what was going on in Cuba, and that it did not pose a new threat to the U.S. that would justify a major military operation against the island. But Kennedy should draw a line warning that there were certain things "we would not tolerate." Bundy proposed to distinguish between "defensive" weapons and "offensive" ones, i.e., nuclear missiles. Kennedy received from Bundy an analysis concluding that Soviet ballistic missiles in Cuba would indeed present "a very significant military threat" to the United States.

McNamara came to the same conclusion. But unlike Bundy, he urged Kennedy not to settle for such a limited warning.²³

Two years younger than Kennedy, McGeorge Bundy had served in the Navy during World War II, and risen rapidly through the ranks of Kennedy's alma mater to become dean of Harvard University's faculty of arts and sciences. From his earliest prep school days, Bundy was recognized as the smartest boy in the class. Detractors said he suffered from hyperlucidity.

A former president of Ford Motor Company, McNamara displayed little knowledge of the wider world of international affairs, or patience for irony. Instead, he had a ferocious appetite for analysis, the knottier and more quantitative, the better.

On September 4, Kennedy chose to take Bundy's advice. He instructed his press secretary, Pierre Salinger, to issue the public warning drawing the line at any Soviet deployment of "offensive" weapons. Everyone, including the Soviets, understood that this meant systems able to deliver nuclear weapons against the United States. As Bundy had explained to Kennedy, the White House statement was as significant for what it did not say—namely, that Washington *would* tolerate "defensive" weapons—as for what it said. This episode, therefore, carried much meaning privately for the continuing debate about the future of *Mongoose*, as well as publicly for the ongoing congressional attacks on Kennedy's policy. His best hope was to overwhelm the critics with a barrage of official statements disclaiming any Soviet provocation in Cuba, thus deflating the opposition's case.

The administration mounted a forceful campaign of denial designed to discredit opponents' claims. The president himself manned the front line of this offensive, and most administration officials participated. In his news conference on August 29, Kennedy attacked as "irresponsible" calls for an invasion of Cuba, stressing rather "the totality of our obligations" and promising to "watch what happens in Cuba with the closest attention."²⁴ His September 4 statement denied that Soviet actions in Cuba to date posed any serious threat to the U.S.²⁵

On September 11, the Soviet government issued its own public statement denouncing American threats but stating plainly that Moscow saw no need to send nuclear missiles to Cuba. On September 12, Bundy—one of the few people helping to prepare for another press conference—sent Kennedy a memo that urged him to personally repeat what his press secretary had said on September 4. The reasoning was the same; Bundy was capitalizing on the Soviet promise. Bundy's memo tells the president that if he wants to invade Cuba he should *not* follow Bundy's advice (because it downplayed the Soviet threat).²⁶ At his press

conference on the 13th, Kennedy did precisely what Bundy had suggested. He drew a line that accepted what was already discovered and excluded what the Soviets had publicly said they would not do.

Kennedy later told McCone: "You certainly had the situation sized up, but I was one of those who did not think the Soviets would put missiles in Cuba."²⁷ But Kennedy's decision to draw the line he chose arose from an interdepartmental policy struggle about *Mongoose*, not missiles. Bundy's move in that game cleverly exploited his particular role in the White House to contain advocates of American action against Cuba. But the action chosen had unanticipated, fateful consequences when it turned out that the Soviets had been lying. Bundy dismissed that possibility, even in private, well into October.

When the missiles were discovered, Kennedy found himself cornered in ways that he would not have been had he made no statement at all. As he wondered aloud on the first day of deliberations: "Last month I said we weren't going to [allow it]. Last month I should have said that we don't care. But when we said we're *not* going to, and then they go ahead and do it, and then we do nothing, then I should think that our risks increase."²⁸

The process of discovery was thus influenced by ongoing policy debates inside and outside the administration. But the politics of discovery had a second layer. Insiders also bargained over the permissible rules for aerial surveillance of Cuba. Again the debate pitted McCone against Bundy, but this time McCone's leading opponent was the secretary of state, Dean Rusk.

What the president and administration least wanted to hear, the CIA felt reluctant to say, at least without solid proof. When the CIA informed Kennedy on September 6 that they had spotted the coastal defense cruise missiles (not the ballistic missiles), the president's response seemed to convey more concern about a possible leak of such politically radioactive information than about the facts themselves. An internal CIA report of the briefing noted a "freezing atmosphere at the White House."²⁹ A new staffing procedure was devised to control distribution of information about Soviet weapons in Cuba. Reports would be further classified by the codeword "Psalm," to be circulated only to a list of named individuals.³⁰ Though on a honeymoon trip in the south of France, McCone could not stop thinking frequently about Cuba, bombarding his deputy at CIA headquarters repeatedly with cables urging more action, at least more aerial surveillance.

An interdepartmental group, the Committee on Overhead Reconnaissance (COMOR) planned U-2 surveillance flights.

COMOR's recommendations to send U-2s directly over Cuba had been approved earlier. But on September 8, a U-2 operated by Nationalist China (Taiwan) was shot down on a mission over mainland China. This incident followed an August 30 mishap; an American U-2 had inadvertently flown into Soviet airspace over Sakhalin Island, triggering protests from Moscow. So when State Department officials noticed that U-2s were about to fly over Cuba, higher-level officials feared the worst.

Rusk asked Bundy to convene a September 10 meeting at the White House. Robert Kennedy attended too, along with Marshall Carter, acting CIA director (in McCone's absence), and the chairman of COMOR. Rusk complained to Carter, half-jokingly, "How do you expect me to negotiate on Berlin with all these incidents?" Robert Kennedy replied, perhaps also half-jokingly, "What's the matter, Dean, no guts!" The president's brother supported the CIA-proposed flight plan that would cover the areas of Cuba that had not been photographed for more than a month. Rusk, however, would not yield. The result was a compromise. The CIA proposal for a long flight on the edge of and over Cuba was put aside. In its place would be four short flights, two over international waters and two moving quickly over Cuba on short routes. The CIA also urged McNamara to approve low-level reconnaissance flights, but McNamara preferred to leave the job to the U-2s.³¹

The U-2s, however, were slow to fly. The State Department whittled away at the September 10 compromise, which had not been reduced clearly to writing. Rusk remained concerned about overflights directly over the island and managed to delay the process by proposing a new idea. Why not have the Organization of American States sponsor the flights? Analysis of this alternative consumed more time and effort. A flight along Cuba's periphery on September 17 gathered little useful data.³²

As American officials argued, the huge MRBMs were unloaded in Cuba and trundled slowly to their field sites. They were noticed by agents in Cuba, and the reports began winding their way back to Washington on the journey we described in Chapter 4. But still, no U-2 photographs. The CIA tried again with new proposals for aerial surveillance, discussed on September 20. Rusk deflected them again with another counterproposal asking that the various CIA alternatives be combined into a single option to be considered a week later. At this meeting McNamara took a more active role, using the opportunity to renew an old turf battle. Arguing that a shootdown of a military plane would be less embarrassing he insisted successfully that operational responsibility for the flights be moved from the CIA to the Air Force's

Strategic Air Command.³³ Over strong opposition from CIA, this was agreed. Finally, on September 27, McCone, by now back in Washington, won grudging approval for overflights of Cuba's periphery. The flights discovered more air and coastal defense installations, but no nuclear missiles. Thus Undersecretary of State George Ball testified to a congressional committee on October 3: "Our intelligence is very good and very hard. All the indications are that this is equipment which is basically of a defensive capability and it does not offer any offensive capability to Cuba as against the United States or the other nations of the hemisphere."³⁴

On October 4 at the next weekly meeting of the Cuba/Mongoose decision group, the Special Group (Augmented), McCone turned up the pressure. But again the mounting evidence of Soviet arms in Cuba was entangled in policy debate of the future of the Mongoose program. McCone complained of program inaction; Robert Kennedy sharply said they had approved whatever had been proposed. A consensus emerged that incremental change in Mongoose was no longer enough. More sabotage would be considered, even laying mines in Cuban harbors.³⁵

McCone returned to the issue of overflights and criticized the administration statements, pointing out how little information the U.S. had of Cuba's interior—essentially nothing in the last month.³⁶ There had been bad weather; it was hurricane season. But though administration officials were to claim later that only bad weather had prevented overflights (and presented testimony saying so), the later assertions were not correct.

As September turned to October, a watchful president was keeping an eye on developments in Cuba and on U.S. contingency planning for military action against Cuba.³⁷ On October 9, bolstered by the human agent reports that had now filtered up through the system, McCone won assent, including personal agreement from President Kennedy, to a COMOR-approved plan for direct overflights over Cuba. On October 10 McCone brought Kennedy news, from naval photography of crates aboard Soviet merchant ships, that IL-28 bombers, capable of carrying nuclear weapons, might already have landed in Cuba. Kennedy's first reaction was to think about leaks to the press. He worried aloud, McCone noted, that "a new and more violent Cuban issue would be injected into the campaign and this would seriously affect his independence of action." Kennedy wanted all further information suppressed. McCone said this would be dangerous. Certainly the necessary intelligence analysts had to be informed. McCone recalled Kennedy's concluding that "we'll have to do something drastic about Cuba" and that he looked forward to seeing the military contingency plan scheduled to be presented to him the next week.³⁸

Four days later, however, on Sunday, October 14, on ABC's *Issues and Answers*, presidential assistant McGeorge Bundy denied the presence of Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba just as a U-2 was taking its first pictures of them. In response to a reporter's probe about the "interpretation of the military installations in Cuba which the administration emphasizes are defensive in nature and not offensive," Bundy asserted: "I know that there is no present evidence, and I think that there is no present likelihood that the Cubans and the Cuban government and the Soviet government would, in combination, attempt to install a major offensive capability."³⁹ (But of course, Bundy knew that the IL-28 bombers were in Cuba, weapons he had classified as "offensive" when declaring this line.) The day before the flight of the U-2 that discovered the missiles, Kennedy had campaigned in Capehart's Indiana against those "self-appointed generals and admirals who want to send someone else's sons to war."⁴⁰ On Monday, October 15, just as he finished delivering a speech to the National Press Club addressing the question of Soviet activity in Cuba and arguing that the buildup was "basically defensive in character," Assistant Secretary of State Edwin Martin received a phone call. The caller informed Martin that offensive missiles had been discovered in Cuba.⁴¹

Discovery of the missiles two weeks earlier or two weeks later could have made a significant difference in the outcome of the crisis. There is no evidence that President Kennedy was trying to prevent discovery of the missiles. Robert Kennedy actually picked up McCone's arguments and made them cogently in the September 10 debate McCone missed. Instead, the timing was the product of pulling and hauling, a tug of war principally between McCone, on one side, and Rusk with Bundy on the other. McCone's credibility as an intelligence analyst warning of Soviet missiles was compromised by his advocacy of bolder action in the *Mongoose* operation. Moreover, the accident of his absence on his honeymoon during the crucial period left his case to subordinates less able to contend with the secretary of state.

The Politics of Choice

The U-2 photographs presented conclusive evidence of Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba. This revelation fell upon politicized players in a delicate situation. As one high official recalls, Khrushchev had caught us "with our pants down." What each of the central participants perceived, and how each sought to cover both his own nakedness and the administration's embarrassment, reflected what went before and framed the deliberations to follow.

Surprise fails to capture the character of President Kennedy's initial reaction. Rather, it was one of startled anger, most adequately conveyed by the exclamation: "He can't do that to me!"⁴² That exclamation in this context was triple-barreled. First, in terms of the president's attention and priorities at that moment, Khrushchev had chosen the most unhelpful act of all. In a highly sensitive domestic political context where his opponents demanded action against Cuba, Kennedy was following a moderate course. In support of that policy he had drawn a distinction between "defensive" and "offensive" weapons, staked his full presidential authority on the flat statement that the Soviets were not placing offensive weapons in Cuba, and warned unambiguously that such weapons would not be tolerated. Second, Kennedy and his closest advisers had attempted to relieve tension, including making a substantial investment in assuring that all communications between the president and Chairman Khrushchev would be straightforward and accurate. Contact had been made; Khrushchev was reciprocating. He had assured the president through the most direct and personal channels that he understood Kennedy's domestic problem and would do nothing to complicate it. He had given solemn public and private assurances that the Soviet Union would not put nuclear missiles into Cuba. But then *this*—the Chairman had lied to the president. Third, Khrushchev's action challenged the president personally. Did he, John F. Kennedy, have the courage in the crunch to start down a path that had a real chance of leading to nuclear war? If not, Khrushchev would win this round and gain confidence for the upcoming confrontation over Berlin. Kennedy had worried, as a consequence of the Bay of Pigs and after his June 1961 meeting with Khrushchev in Vienna, that the Chairman might have misjudged his mettle. This time Kennedy determined to stand fast.

With the issue framed in this way by this background, nothing short of a forceful response would suffice for this president of the United States. Whatever the foreign policy arguments, to fail to act forcibly would: (1) undermine the confidence of the members of his administration, especially those who in the previous weeks had so firmly defended his policy toward Cuba; (2) convince his permanent government that the administration had no leader, thus cultivating their willingness to challenge all of his policies; (3) cut the ground out from under his fellow Democrats (most of whom were standing for reelection on his Cuban policy) with the elections less than three weeks away; (4) destroy his reputation with all but a few members of Congress; (5) create public distrust of his word and his will; (6) reinforce his image from the Bay of Pigs failure, thereby sealing the fate of his administra-

tion: a short chapter in the history books entitled "Crucified Over Cuba;" and (7) feed doubts in his own mind about himself.

What weight each of these various considerations may have had in the president's mind is impossible to say. No doubt the calculations rehearsed above do not capture all his thoughts. In his mind, the distinctions we have drawn among them would dissolve, as would the distinction between a blow to him and a blow to his country—which tend to blur when seen from the seat of a president.⁴³ But it is clear that the entire circle of pressures to which he as president had to be responsive pushed him in a single direction: vigorous action. Well down that road, feeling the heat of the risks involved, alone with his brother, John Kennedy mused about whether he had any choice. There was more than hyperbole in Robert Kennedy's reply. "Well, there isn't any choice. I mean, you would have been, you would have been impeached." "Well, I think I would have been impeached," the President replied.⁴⁴ The nonforcible paths—avoiding military measures, resorting instead to diplomacy—could not have been more irrelevant to *his* problem. Of course, he was not the only official around the table to focus on his personal version of the problem.

The Joint Chiefs of Staff wanted an invasion to eliminate this threat. But their new chairman, Maxwell Taylor, had his doubts about getting "our feet in that deep mud in Cuba." Better, Taylor explained, to gather more intelligence, pull it all together in the next few days while no one knew the missiles had been discovered, and then take the missiles, the bombers and MiG-21 aircraft, and the SAMs "right out with one hard crack." He estimated that it would take about five days to do the complete job from the air.⁴⁵

For Dean Rusk, the initial issues were diplomatic. He did not articulate a clear view about how to resolve the underlying problem, but spoke instead to the need for consultation with key allies. His main suggestion was the idea of going directly to Castro, warning the Cuban leader that the Soviets were putting him in mortal danger and would happily sell him out for a victory in Berlin, in the hope of getting Castro to push the Soviets out. Kennedy thought the proposal had no prospects, and no one outside State spoke up for it.

For Secretary of Defense McNamara, the missiles were principally a political problem. In his view, the overall nuclear balance would not be significantly affected by the Soviet deployment. (This judgment was shared by his deputy, Roswell Gilpatric, but by no other relevant officials or analysts in the Pentagon.) At the start, therefore, McNamara was skeptical about the need for military action. He argued that no air strike could be considered if the Soviet missiles in

Cuba were operational and could therefore be launched in a retaliatory strike against the United States. Taylor suspected McNamara was exaggerating the size of the required air strike in order to make it seem tantamount to an invasion. To State officials, McNamara seemed to be exaggerating the danger that an air strike would trigger a revolt in Cuba that would suck the U.S. into an invasion. But uncertainties raised in this sparring did slow the rush to a military solution.

McNamara raised the idea of blockading future weapons shipments to Cuba, but his version of the option would do nothing about the missiles already deployed there except to warn the Soviets not to use them. "Now, this alternative doesn't seem to be a very acceptable one," he allowed. "But wait until you work on the others." At the end of the first day of deliberations, and only after President Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, Rusk, Taylor, and most other participants had left the room, McNamara restated his underlying skeptical premise, more candidly, to Bundy and Rusk's deputy, George Ball. "I don't believe it's primarily a military problem. It's primarily a domestic political problem." McNamara thought his approach might at least provide enough "action" to satisfy his notion of domestic political requirements.⁴⁶

Bundy had framed the issue for the president in the weeks before discovery, but he was now uncertain about what to do. Bundy was always hard to read. As one of Bundy's colleagues is reported to have commented: "You don't know what he thinks. I don't know what he thinks. The president doesn't know what he thinks. And I sometimes wonder whether he knows what he thinks." As Bundy recalls his own reaction, "I almost deliberately stayed in the minority. I felt that it was very important to keep the president's choices open."⁴⁷ Having steered the policy of warnings that crashed when the missiles were found, Bundy was uncharacteristically reticent. Two days later, on October 18, he advocated taking no action, fearing that the Soviets would retaliate in kind against Berlin. Then the next day, after agonizing further over the question, Bundy changed his mind again and supported an air strike against the missiles.

By October 19 other positions had hardened. UN ambassador and former presidential candidate Adlai Stevenson joined McNamara in the ranks of the skeptics. McCone joined Taylor in urging an air strike. New overflights revealed for the first time that intermediate-range missiles had also been shipped to Cuba, impressing even McNamara with the scale of the Soviet effort. This news tipped Taylor join his JCS colleagues in support of an invasion to follow up the air strikes. Meanwhile, former Secretary of State Dean Acheson joined those advocating an air strike, but, unlike Taylor and McCone, he called for a

very narrow strike only against the missile sites, ignoring the Soviet bombers, fighter-bombers, and antiaircraft units. Arguments for this narrow version of the air strike seemed to be persuasive to Bundy, leaving him disdainful of the military's crude, massive attack.⁴⁸

As discussions continued, additional participants injected new ideas. By October 18 Kennedy seems reluctantly to have agreed that any strike would have to be a large one, as the military suggested. Ball had vehemently raised a moral objection to any American surprise attack on another country, offering the potent analogy to Pearl Harbor. Robert Kennedy picked up Ball's argument, and Rusk chimed in, calling the surprise attack "this business of carrying the mark of Cain on your brow for the rest of your life." "If we do that to a small country," Robert Kennedy observed, "I think it's a hell of a burden to carry." But the most telling argument for President Kennedy, which he repeated in days to come, was the one he outlined for his subordinates on October 18. An attack on Cuba would cause a retaliatory attack on Berlin which in turn would instantly present Kennedy with no meaningful military option but nuclear retaliation. So he said, musing aloud, "the question really is to what action we take which lessens the chances of a nuclear exchange, which obviously is the prime failure—that's obvious to us."⁴⁹ Another prestigious outsider brought into the deliberations, former Defense Secretary Robert Lovett, reinforced Kennedy's worry that a surprise attack might prompt a reprisal in kind against Berlin.⁵⁰

It is clear from Kennedy's taped recapitulation of a White House meeting on the night of October 18 and from the arguments he made to the unconvinced Joint Chiefs of Staff the next morning, that by October 18–19 the president was turning away from a surprise strike on the missiles.⁵¹ This left the intermediate option, the blockade, originally broached by McNamara.

But, again, new participants injected new ideas. Two veteran diplomats and Kremlin-watchers, Charles Bohlen and Llewellyn Thompson, urged Kennedy to deliver an ultimatum to Khrushchev, giving him a chance to withdraw the missiles. Others argued, however, that a diplomatic ultimatum, by itself, would entangle the U.S. in a fruitless diplomatic snarl.⁵² Treasury Secretary Douglas Dillon was the first to suggest the idea of using a blockade as the vehicle for delivering and underscoring the ultimatum. On October 18, Thompson pushed for this conception of the blockade. The blockade would be accompanied, he explained, by a demand that the weapons in Cuba be dismantled. "If they are armed, we would then take them out." Thompson added, "I think we should be under no illusions, this is probably in the end going

to lead to the same thing. But we do it in an entirely different posture and background and much less danger of getting up into the big war."⁵³

On the morning of October 19 President Kennedy met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and found them adamant in favor of an immediate air attack against Cuba that would retain the military advantages of surprise. Air Force chief of staff Curtis LeMay, confident of his own political base of support on Capitol Hill, was boldest in confronting the president. "This blockade and political action, I see leading into war. I don't see any other solution. It will lead right into war. This is almost as bad as the appeasement at Munich." After the meeting, Kennedy departed on a previously scheduled campaign trip to avoid letting the Soviets in on the U.S.'s secret. He asked Robert Kennedy and Sorensen "to pull the group together."⁵⁴

Opinion was still generally divided between a blockade and an immediate air strike. Meetings at the State Department ran all day on October 19 and into the night. Bundy told his colleagues that in the course of a sleepless night, he had decided that an air strike was needed. Decisive action would confront the Soviets, and the world, with an American *fait accompli*. He said he had passed this advice to President Kennedy. Spurred by the arguments of Dean Acheson, the air strike option which had almost died after the White House meeting the night before, now revived. Dillon, McCone, and Taylor agreed generally with Acheson and Bundy, though there were differences among them about specifics of the air strike approach. McNamara was strongly opposed. Robert Kennedy then said, with a grin, that he too had spoken with the president and that a surprise attack like Pearl Harbor was "not in our traditions." He "favored action," but action that gave the Soviets a chance to pull back."⁵⁵

Rusk then proposed that the advisers divide into working groups to refine the blockade and air strike options. After hours of discussion within and among the working groups, McNamara emerged as the chief advocate of a blockade–negotiate option. He thought the U.S. would at least have to give up its missile bases in Turkey and Italy, and probably more. Robert Kennedy thought this went too far. He argued that "in looking forward to the future it would be better for our children and grandchildren if we decided to face the Soviet threat, stand up to it, and eliminate it, now. The circumstances for doing so at some future time were bound to be more unfavorable, the risks would be greater, the chances of success less good."⁵⁶

This was the opening for advocates of the blockade–ultimatum idea, the blockade a first step backed up by readiness to strike. So when McNamara and other Pentagon officials conceded that a strike

might still be viable *after* a blockade (with a consequent loss of surprise), Robert Kennedy "took particular note of this shift" and began portraying the blockade as only the first step, a prelude to further military action. The president's brother thought "it was now pretty clear what the decision should be." Sorensen agreed to write the first draft of a blockade speech.⁵⁷ Acheson retreated to his farm in Maryland. President Kennedy cut short his campaign trip, pleading a cold, and returned for a decisive White House meeting, formally a meeting of the National Security Council, on October 20.

The National Security Council meeting resembled a Greek drama in which the players maneuvered according to a plot, that moved inexorably toward the predetermined outcome. But, as experience had already shown, nothing could be considered sealed until every crucial detail had been decided. McNamara presented the blockade-negotiate approach. Following the blockade, he said, the U.S. would negotiate for the removal of missiles from Turkey and Italy and talk about closing the U.S. base at Guantanamo in Cuba. McNamara opposed an ultimatum demanding removal of the missiles, saying it was too risky. Stevenson supported him.⁵⁸

Taylor, supported by Bundy, presented the case for an air strike, to begin two days later on Monday, October 22. Robert Kennedy agreed with Taylor that the present moment was the last chance to destroy Castro and the Soviet missiles in Cuba. Sorensen, who was sympathetic to the blockade-negotiate approach, disagreed.

Robert Kennedy then argued for "a combination of the blockade route and the air strike route." The blockade would be coupled with an ultimatum demanding removal of the missiles. If the Russians did not comply, the U.S. would proceed with an air strike. That, he explained, would get away from the Pearl Harbor surprise attack problem. Dillon and McCone then supported this option. Dillon suggested a 72-hour interval between the demand and action; McCone agreed. Thompson also voiced his support for this approach, which he had helped devise.

Rusk described yet one more approach, a fourth major option. It was for a blockade, but instead of an ultimatum or an offer to trade U.S. assets, Rusk suggested that the objective should be simply to freeze the situation. The Soviet missile installations in Cuba would be monitored by United Nations observation teams.

President Kennedy first sharply ruled out the blockade-negotiate variant, feeling that such action would convey to the world that the U.S. had been frightened into abandoning its positions. He then ruled

in favor of the blockade-ultimatum option, while urging that any air strike be limited only to the missile sites. The strike was to be ready for implementation by October 23. The group also agreed that the blockade would be narrowly focused on Soviet arms deliveries, not on all shipments of vital supplies—such as oil. The basic decision was made.

Advocates of the blockade-ultimatum approach were still suspicious that the blockade-negotiate proponents would try to win the day, probably through Sorensen's drafting of Kennedy's speech to the nation. McCone called both Kennedys later on October 20 to nail down the details. President Kennedy assured McCone that he had agreed both with the CIA director's recommendation and with his arguments.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, as McCone had feared, the argument between the negotiate and ultimatum camps was reopened when the advisers reconvened to discuss Sorensen's draft speech the next day, October 21. Rusk also returned repeatedly to his freeze and inspect idea. President Kennedy rebuffed Rusk, though he conceded that later, once American resolve was clear, he might consider a UN move to remove missiles in Cuba along with those in Turkey and Italy. Turning to the speech draft, Kennedy made a series of decisions that sided with the blockade-ultimatum faction. He removed language emphasizing the horrors of war. Backed by Thompson, McCone, and Dillon, he removed an invitation to Khrushchev to come to a summit meeting to talk about the crisis. First they would see how Khrushchev dealt with the missiles in Cuba. An offer to trade U.S. missiles or bases would, Kennedy thought, signal to Khrushchev that "we were in a state of panic." We "should be clear that we would accept nothing less than the ending of the missile capability now in Cuba, no reinforcement of that capability, and no further construction of missile sites."⁶⁰

To achieve that result, McNamara warned, the U.S. would have to invade. Kennedy held his ground. In effect ruling against McNamara as well as Rusk and Stevenson (and in favor of his brother, the two Republicans in his cabinet, and a career diplomat), President Kennedy repeated that he was talking about the dismantlement of the missiles now in Cuba. Although he appeared to line up firmly with the blockade-ultimatum advocates, there are subtle indications that both President Kennedy and Robert Kennedy had not definitely decided just what would follow the ultimatum, and when. The operational questions of the moment would be settled consistent with the ultimatum-strike sequence, but no fixed time limit was set on the U.S. demand for removal of the missiles. Conscious of the awesome responsibilities he shouldered, President Kennedy held back from any unequivocal commitment about

just when or how the U.S. might strike, or negotiate, once his government's resolve to get the missiles removed was plain to all.⁶¹

In sum, the missiles posed no single issue. The players who gathered at the pinnacle of the U.S. government perceived many faces of quite different issues, framed for them by their character, responsibilities, and experiences. In spite of efforts to classify the men as "hawks" and "doves"—a metaphor coined during this crisis—their reactions were much more complex than the metaphors suggest.⁶²

At the outset of the crisis, the individuals who convened at the president's discretion as the ExCom whistled many different tunes. Before the final decision was made, the majority whistled a single tune: the blockade. That general approach, though, had then subdivided into at least three distinct options for presidential choice. A basic choice had yielded to a richer, more sophisticated menu of choices, enabling the president to calibrate U.S. actions more carefully, find the precise spot where he felt the greatest confidence, and give clear operational guidance to his subordinates. The process by which this happened is a story of the most subtle and intricate probing, pulling, and hauling, leading, guiding, and spurring.

The decision to blockade, and link the blockade to a demand for removal of the missiles from Cuba backed by the threat of more direct military action, thus emerged as a collage. Its pieces included the president's initial decision that something forceful had to be done; the resistance of McNamara and others to a surprise air strike; and the constant relationship, especially for President Kennedy, between Cuba and Berlin. To get from those impulses to a government decision that combined both the blockade and air strike approaches required an effort to forge the synthesis.

Though the ideas had not originated with him, Robert Kennedy was the engineer of consensus. According to his published recollection of the ExCom deliberations, "There was no rank, and, in fact, we did not even have a chairman."⁶³ But the others recall that, when President Kennedy was absent, Robert Kennedy "soon emerged as the discussion leader."⁶⁴ He recalled that "the conversations were completely uninhibited and unrestricted."⁶⁵ Sorensen remarked on the "sense of complete equality." Nevertheless, he allows that in "shaping our deliberations when the President was absent, the best performer . . . was the Attorney General."⁶⁶ Stevenson compared the attorney general to "a bull in a china shop." In another participant's words, "Bobby made Christians of us. We all knew little brother was watching; and keeping a little list of where everyone stood."⁶⁷ But there is no evidence that Robert Kennedy knew which option he favored from

the start. He had not imagined the concept he ultimately advocated. The quality of the discussions, and the way they unfolded, helped him find just the mix he, and his brother, could choose.

SOVIET WITHDRAWAL OF THE MISSILES FROM CUBA

Near the end of September 1962, one of Khrushchev's aides remembers the Soviet leader receiving a progress report on the missile deployment, turning quietly to the aide, and saying, "Soon hell will break loose." The aide replied, "I hope the boat does not capsize, Nikita Sergeyevich." Khrushchev thought for a moment, then answered, "Now it's too late to change anything."⁶⁸

After his October 18 meetings with Kennedy and Rusk, Gromyko reported back that the overall situation on Cuba was "completely satisfactory." The Americans, he reported, are "amazed by the Soviet Union's courage in assisting Cuba." Gromyko had no inkling that the Americans knew about the missiles. He concluded his report by saying that "a USA military adventure against Cuba is almost impossible to imagine."⁶⁹

As discussed in Chapter 4, the Soviet government was caught off guard by the American discovery of the missiles, even though Soviet soldiers in Cuba apparently detected the U-2 overflights of October 14, 15, and 17. The surmise at one of the White House meetings that Moscow had been caught "with its contingencies down," was not far from the truth. The Soviet deputy foreign minister later told a colleague, bluntly, that, "Khrushchev shit [in] his pants."⁷⁰

The Kremlin plunged into its own crisis deliberations on October 22, after learning that Kennedy planned to address the American people. Unlike Kennedy, Khrushchev continued to rely upon his normal foreign policy process, consulting a small group of Presidium members aided by the defense and foreign ministers and the leading international expert from the Communist Party's Central Committee staff. When a formal decision was needed, Khrushchev convened the full Presidium.

Khrushchev worried that the Americans would attack Cuba. At one moment, he considered turning the nuclear weapons over to the Cubans and letting them respond. But in the next, he assured his colleagues, who presumably were alarmed by this suggestion, that he would not let Castro use the MRBMs against the United States. Perhaps the Cubans could deter an invasion just by threatening to use the short-range tactical nuclear weapons against an invader.⁷¹

The Presidium first decided that Defense Minister Malinovsky should cable General Pliyev, commander of the Soviet troops in Cuba,

ordering him to bring his troops to combat readiness and to use all Cuban and Soviet forces, except the nuclear arms, to meet an attack. Then the Presidium changed its position and considered sending a message authorizing use of the tactical nuclear weapons but not the ballistic missiles. Malinovsky was uneasy about this instruction, fearful that the Americans might intercept it and use it as a pretext for launching a first strike with nuclear weapons. So the Kremlin sent out the initial orders, reserving for Moscow any authorization for the use of nuclear weapons.⁷²

After Kennedy's speech announcing the U.S. discovery of the missiles and the blockade, the Soviet government breathed a collective sigh of relief. The Americans had not attacked Cuba. A weaker response, the blockade left them room for political maneuver. So the Soviet government issued a flat, tough rejection of the American demands the next day, October 23. Khrushchev and his Presidium decided to halt most of the 30 ships en route to Cuba. But they directed the 4 carrying IRBMs and a fifth, loaded with nuclear warheads for the missiles, to proceed on course along with 4 submarines carrying nuclear-armed torpedoes. As Kennedy expected, the Soviets also considered a countermove against Berlin. Vasily Kuznetsov, first deputy minister of foreign affairs, proposed the idea of countering the blockade with pressure against West Berlin an initiative that had been suggested by Ambassador Dobrynin as well. One of those present recalls that the idea "provoked a sharp, and I would say violent, reaction by Khrushchev" that he could "do without such advice . . . we had no intention to add fuel to the conflict."⁷³

Tension increased on October 24. The Soviet armed forces had increased their readiness for worldwide military action. Another cable from Dobrynin arrived, reporting on an October 23 meeting with Robert Kennedy and making it clear that the Americans would stop and board advancing Soviet ships. At this point, the 36 MRBMs (for 24 launchers) were in Cuba, along with their nuclear warheads. Nearly 100 other nuclear warheads were also in Cuba for the coastal defense missiles, short-range rockets, and IL-28 bombers. The 24 nuclear warheads to be carried on the IRBMs (for the 18 launch sites still under construction) were also in Cuba, but the IRBMs themselves were at sea, heading toward the quarantine line.⁷⁴ Khrushchev was publicly defiant. Privately, however, he apparently reversed the Presidium decision of the previous day.

The ships carrying IRBMs stopped.⁷⁵ A few ships with more innocent cargoes, including the *Bucharest* and *Grozny*, sailed on—apparently to test American enforcement of the quarantine. The ship carrying the nuclear warheads had already arrived at a Cuban port.

Procedurally, the decisions were odd. Khrushchev did not reconvene the full Presidium or advise them that he had reversed their previous ruling. Indeed, he spoke at the next Presidium meeting, October 25, as if the ships carrying IRBMs were continuing on their way.⁷⁶ Khrushchev had "blinked," but he may have tried to keep all his colleagues in the Presidium from knowing it at least at the moment.

By the morning of October 25, the Soviet leadership had received a tough, terse reply to Khrushchev's defiant pronouncement the previous day. Kennedy wrote "it was not I who issued the first challenge in this case." Kennedy underscored his "hope that your government will take the necessary action to permit a restoration of the earlier situation."⁷⁷ Khrushchev reconvened the Presidium. He told members he did not want to trade "caustic remarks" any longer with Kennedy. Instead, he wanted to turn around four ships still carrying missiles to Cuba—not telling them that he had already issued orders to stop the ships. Khrushchev told his colleagues that he was willing to "dismantle the missiles to make Cuba into a zone of peace."

Thus by the Thursday of showdown week, Khrushchev abandoned his hopes for changing the military balance to provide chips for his Berlin plan. We know almost nothing of the personal turmoil he must have experienced in making this painful choice. Nor do we know what internal political calculations influenced his apparent deceptions in telling his colleagues what orders he had given to which ships, and when. Instead, Khrushchev suggested a new offer to the Americans: "Give us a pledge not to invade Cuba, and we will remove the missiles." He was also prepared to allow UN inspection of the missile sites. The Presidium approved his plan with the usual unanimous vote.⁷⁸

Khrushchev said, however, that he wanted to "look around" some more and make sure Kennedy really would stand fast. Khrushchev waited for more news. He learned that the *Bucharest* had been allowed to proceed to Cuba. There is no indication that he and his colleagues agonized, as Kennedy's ExCom did, over what would happen in encounters at the quarantine line. All we know for sure is that Khrushchev kept the Presidium-approved offer for a negotiated settlement in his pocket. He sent no message to Kennedy.

On Friday, October 26, Khrushchev was stirred to action again. The reasons apparently had little to do with any American action and much to do with the Soviets' own strange system for getting information and analysis. Fursenko and Naftali find that on the morning of October 26 Khrushchev received a series of intelligence reports of increased U.S. military readiness and preparations. Among these, a KGB report from Washington stood out. It reported that, according to a well-connected

American journalist, a U.S. attack on Cuba was "prepared to the last detail" and "could begin at any moment." The report was based on a KGB agent's conversations with Warren Rogers, a reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune*, who, not knowing his bartender might be a spy, had simply expressed his own freewheeling personal opinion over drinks at the National Press Club.⁷⁹ His status as the lead source on Khrushchev's desk that morning speaks volumes about the process that produced the Soviet government's intelligence and analysis.

Khrushchev also received a report cabled from his ambassador to Cuba, Alexeev. Alexeev said that Castro had approved of the Soviet action to avoid a confrontation on the quarantine line. However, Castro now wanted to shoot down "one or two piratic American planes over Cuban territory," i.e., American reconnaissance planes, which on October 25 had begun flying low-level reconnaissance missions directly over the Soviet bases. According to Alexeev, Castro did not take rumors of a possible American invasion very seriously.⁸⁰

Moved by these and possibly other concerns, Khrushchev drafted and sent a long personal, rambling letter to Kennedy on October 26 suggesting the terms of a settlement. If the United States would promise not to invade Cuba, "the necessity for the presence of our military specialists in Cuba would disappear." It was more a hint than a concrete proposal. McNamara observed scornfully that the proposed deal was "full of holes . . . 12 pages of fluff. That's no contract. You couldn't sign that and say we know what we signed." Khrushchev's message reflected the discussion and decision approved by the Presidium the previous day, so he sought no further formal approval, but merely sent copies of the letter to the members.⁸¹ While the Soviet ambassador at the UN disclaimed authority to negotiate any deal, the Americans saw confirmation of Khrushchev's readiness to negotiate when Washington's KGB resident, Alexander Fomin (real name: Feklisov), approached journalist John Scali, echoing similar terms.⁸² The convergence of Fomin's message with Khrushchev's wishes was a coincidence. The KGB man apparently acted on his own, without instructions from Moscow, perhaps prompted by his own fears of nuclear war.

It is not clear how Khrushchev reacted to Alexeev's message reporting Castro's desire to start shooting down U.S. reconnaissance planes. Nor is there any evidence of Soviet interest in the American boarding of their chartered cargo ship, the *Marucla*. During the day on Friday Khrushchev probably heard that a Swedish cargo ship under Soviet charter, the *Coalangatta*, had successfully defied the blockade. But there is no available evidence about Soviet attention to Washington's concern about the continued movement of their ship, *Grozny*, toward the quar-

antine line. This directly contradicted the promise Khrushchev had made to UN Secretary General U Thant.

Sometime between about midday (in Moscow) on Friday and Saturday morning, October 27, Khrushchev reconsidered, concluding that the Americans could be pushed harder. Perhaps he or others in the Kremlin misjudged the signals from the Americans' selective enforcement of the quarantine. Khrushchev's son's view is that his father felt obliged to send at least one ship through (the *Bucharest*) and was surprised when the Americans failed to stop it. Alexeev later commented that the Americans' willingness to let some ships through meant that they had really just established a paper blockade.⁸³ This perception was not quite accurate, however. The record showed that the Americans had actively considered reaching out even beyond the 500-mile quarantine line in order to "grab" a Soviet ship carrying arms to Cuba. At the same time, they hesitated to force a confrontation over ships that were not carrying arms. Yet some American officials, especially on Friday, were quite worried that their attempt to modulate subtly enforcement of the quarantine was sending mixed messages to Moscow.

Between Friday and Saturday, Castro flip-flopped, but in just the opposite direction from Khrushchev. Instead of the earlier relaxed dismissal of the possibility of an American invasion, Castro had now become alarmed and fearful. The Soviet commander reported to Moscow that the Cubans expected the air strike to come at any moment and were preparing to fire at American aircraft if there was an attack. General Pliyevev added that he had dispersed nuclear warheads from central storage to their launch sites. Moscow endorsed these plans.⁸⁴

Khrushchev, however, was less concerned. He reconvened the Presidium on October 27, and he told them that the U.S. would not dare to attack Cuba. Five days had passed since Kennedy's speech and nothing had happened. "To my mind they are not ready to do it now." So Khrushchev proposed to up the ante with an offer that added a new demand—for withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey. With that, he said, "we would win."⁸⁵

Available evidence provides limited insight into the personal and inter-personal calculations that led Khrushchev to conclude that the Americans would be more accommodating or add the Turkish missiles as a bargaining point. Though they were a long-standing irritant, the missiles had not been an important topic in any of the previous Presidium discussions during the crisis. Had Khrushchev included the Turkey idea in his private letter to Kennedy on October 26, the U.S. would likely have found a way to accept it. The Americans had feared, with cause, that Khrushchev's objective was Berlin, so they might

ordering him to bring his troops to combat readiness and to use all Cuban and Soviet forces, except the nuclear arms, to meet an attack. Then the Presidium changed its position and considered sending a message authorizing use of the tactical nuclear weapons but not the ballistic missiles. Malinovsky was uneasy about this instruction, fearful that the Americans might intercept it and use it as a pretext for launching a first strike with nuclear weapons. So the Kremlin sent out the initial orders, reserving for Moscow any authorization for the use of nuclear weapons.⁷²

After Kennedy's speech announcing the U.S. discovery of the missiles and the blockade, the Soviet government breathed a collective sigh of relief. The Americans had not attacked Cuba. A weaker response, the blockade left them room for political maneuver. So the Soviet government issued a flat, tough rejection of the American demands the next day, October 23. Khrushchev and his Presidium decided to halt most of the 30 ships en route to Cuba. But they directed the 4 carrying IRBMs and a fifth, loaded with nuclear warheads for the missiles, to proceed on course along with 4 submarines carrying nuclear-armed torpedoes. As Kennedy expected, the Soviets also considered a countermove against Berlin. Vasily Kuznetsov, first deputy minister of foreign affairs, proposed the idea of countering the blockade with pressure against West Berlin an initiative that had been suggested by Ambassador Dobrynin as well. One of those present recalls that the idea "provoked a sharp, and I would say violent, reaction by Khrushchev" that he could "do without such advice . . . we had no intention to add fuel to the conflict."⁷³

Tension increased on October 24. The Soviet armed forces had increased their readiness for worldwide military action. Another cable from Dobrynin arrived, reporting on an October 23 meeting with Robert Kennedy and making it clear that the Americans would stop and board advancing Soviet ships. At this point, the 36 MRBMs (for 24 launchers) were in Cuba, along with their nuclear warheads. Nearly 100 other nuclear warheads were also in Cuba for the coastal defense missiles, short-range rockets, and IL-28 bombers. The 24 nuclear warheads to be carried on the IRBMs (for the 18 launch sites still under construction) were also in Cuba, but the IRBMs themselves were at sea, heading toward the quarantine line.⁷⁴ Khrushchev was publicly defiant. Privately, however, he apparently reversed the Presidium decision of the previous day.

The ships carrying IRBMs stopped.⁷⁵ A few ships with more innocent cargoes, including the *Bucharest* and *Grozny*, sailed on—apparently to test American enforcement of the quarantine. The ship carrying the nuclear warheads had already arrived at a Cuban port.

Procedurally, the decisions were odd. Khrushchev did not reconvene the full Presidium or advise them that he had reversed their previous ruling. Indeed, he spoke at the next Presidium meeting, October 25, as if the ships carrying IRBMs were continuing on their way.⁷⁶ Khrushchev had "blinked," but he may have tried to keep all his colleagues in the Presidium from knowing it at least at the moment.

By the morning of October 25, the Soviet leadership had received a tough, terse reply to Khrushchev's defiant pronouncement the previous day. Kennedy wrote "it was not I who issued the first challenge in this case." Kennedy underscored his "hope that your government will take the necessary action to permit a restoration of the earlier situation."⁷⁷ Khrushchev reconvened the Presidium. He told members he did not want to trade "caustic remarks" any longer with Kennedy. Instead, he wanted to turn around four ships still carrying missiles to Cuba—not telling them that he had already issued orders to stop the ships. Khrushchev told his colleagues that he was willing to "dismantle the missiles to make Cuba into a zone of peace."

Thus by the Thursday of showdown week, Khrushchev abandoned his hopes for changing the military balance to provide chips for his Berlin plan. We know almost nothing of the personal turmoil he must have experienced in making this painful choice. Nor do we know what internal political calculations influenced his apparent deceptions in telling his colleagues what orders he had given to which ships, and when. Instead, Khrushchev suggested a new offer to the Americans: "Give us a pledge not to invade Cuba, and we will remove the missiles." He was also prepared to allow UN inspection of the missile sites. The Presidium approved his plan with the usual unanimous vote.⁷⁸

Khrushchev said, however, that he wanted to "look around" some more and make sure Kennedy really would stand fast. Khrushchev waited for more news. He learned that the *Bucharest* had been allowed to proceed to Cuba. There is no indication that he and his colleagues agonized, as Kennedy's ExCom did, over what would happen in encounters at the quarantine line. All we know for sure is that Khrushchev kept the Presidium-approved offer for a negotiated settlement in his pocket. He sent no message to Kennedy.

On Friday, October 26, Khrushchev was stirred to action again. The reasons apparently had little to do with any American action and much to do with the Soviets' own strange system for getting information and analysis. Fursenko and Naftali find that on the morning of October 26 Khrushchev received a series of intelligence reports of increased U.S. military readiness and preparations. Among these, a KGB report from Washington stood out. It reported that, according to a well-connected

American journalist, a U.S. attack on Cuba was "prepared to the last detail" and "could begin at any moment." The report was based on a KGB agent's conversations with Warren Rogers, a reporter for the *New York Herald Tribune*, who, not knowing his bartender might be a spy, had simply expressed his own freewheeling personal opinion over drinks at the National Press Club.⁷⁹ His status as the lead source on Khrushchev's desk that morning speaks volumes about the process that produced the Soviet government's intelligence and analysis.

Khrushchev also received a report cabled from his ambassador to Cuba, Alexeev. Alexeev said that Castro had approved of the Soviet action to avoid a confrontation on the quarantine line. However, Castro now wanted to shoot down "one or two piratic American planes over Cuban territory," i.e., American reconnaissance planes, which on October 25 had begun flying low-level reconnaissance missions directly over the Soviet bases. According to Alexeev, Castro did not take rumors of a possible American invasion very seriously.⁸⁰

Moved by these and possibly other concerns, Khrushchev drafted and sent a long personal, rambling letter to Kennedy on October 26 suggesting the terms of a settlement. If the United States would promise not to invade Cuba, "the necessity for the presence of our military specialists in Cuba would disappear." It was more a hint than a concrete proposal. McNamara observed scornfully that the proposed deal was "full of holes . . . 12 pages of fluff. That's no contract. You couldn't sign that and say we know what we signed." Khrushchev's message reflected the discussion and decision approved by the Presidium the previous day, so he sought no further formal approval, but merely sent copies of the letter to the members.⁸¹ While the Soviet ambassador at the UN disclaimed authority to negotiate any deal, the Americans saw confirmation of Khrushchev's readiness to negotiate when Washington's KGB resident, Alexander Fomin (real name: Feklisov), approached journalist John Scali, echoing similar terms.⁸² The convergence of Fomin's message with Khrushchev's wishes was a coincidence. The KGB man apparently acted on his own, without instructions from Moscow, perhaps prompted by his own fears of nuclear war.

It is not clear how Khrushchev reacted to Alexeev's message reporting Castro's desire to start shooting down U.S. reconnaissance planes. Nor is there any evidence of Soviet interest in the American boarding of their chartered cargo ship, the *Marucla*. During the day on Friday Khrushchev probably heard that a Swedish cargo ship under Soviet charter, the *Coalangatta*, had successfully defied the blockade. But there is no available evidence about Soviet attention to Washington's concern about the continued movement of their ship, *Grozny*, toward the quar-

antine line. This directly contradicted the promise Khrushchev had made to UN Secretary General U Thant.

Sometime between about midday (in Moscow) on Friday and Saturday morning, October 27, Khrushchev reconsidered, concluding that the Americans could be pushed harder. Perhaps he or others in the Kremlin misjudged the signals from the Americans' selective enforcement of the quarantine. Khrushchev's son's view is that his father felt obliged to send at least one ship through (the *Bucharest*) and was surprised when the Americans failed to stop it. Alexeev later commented that the Americans' willingness to let some ships through meant that they had really just established a paper blockade.⁸³ This perception was not quite accurate, however. The record showed that the Americans had actively considered reaching out even beyond the 500-mile quarantine line in order to "grab" a Soviet ship carrying arms to Cuba. At the same time, they hesitated to force a confrontation over ships that were not carrying arms. Yet some American officials, especially on Friday, were quite worried that their attempt to modulate subtly enforcement of the quarantine was sending mixed messages to Moscow.

Between Friday and Saturday, Castro flip-flopped, but in just the opposite direction from Khrushchev. Instead of the earlier relaxed dismissal of the possibility of an American invasion, Castro had now become alarmed and fearful. The Soviet commander reported to Moscow that the Cubans expected the air strike to come at any moment and were preparing to fire at American aircraft if there was an attack. General Pliyev added that he had dispersed nuclear warheads from central storage to their launch sites. Moscow endorsed these plans.⁸⁴

Khrushchev, however, was less concerned. He reconvened the Presidium on October 27, and he told them that the U.S. would not dare to attack Cuba. Five days had passed since Kennedy's speech and nothing had happened. "To my mind they are not ready to do it now." So Khrushchev proposed to up the ante with an offer that added a new demand—for withdrawal of U.S. missiles from Turkey. With that, he said, "we would win."⁸⁵

Available evidence provides limited insight into the personal and inter-personal calculations that led Khrushchev to conclude that the Americans would be more accommodating or add the Turkish missiles as a bargaining point. Though they were a long-standing irritant, the missiles had not been an important topic in any of the previous Presidium discussions during the crisis. Had Khrushchev included the Turkey idea in his private letter to Kennedy on October 26, the U.S. would likely have found a way to accept it. The Americans had feared, with cause, that Khrushchev's objective was Berlin, so they might

have welcomed such a compromise. As Vice President Lyndon Johnson observed in the secret deliberations: "What we were afraid of was he would never offer this, and what he would want to do is trade Berlin."⁸⁶ No one in the Executive Committee spoke up for the Jupiter missiles. Dillon and McCone, for example, were both quite open about their willingness to trade them. But introducing the idea at this point, in this way, should have raised some obvious questions from the Soviet perspective. Wouldn't the Americans now perceive this as a change in the Soviet negotiating position, inconsistent with the Friday letter, and with the proposal of the KGB resident in Washington? The Americans might think the Soviet leader was reneging on his earlier offer.

A student of negotiations would have cautioned Khrushchev on his bargaining tactics.⁸⁷ To change the terms of an offer before the party with whom one is negotiating has 24 hours to respond to the first offer was likely to generate confusion. It would raise doubts about his seriousness, or suggest that he was just trying to stall. In fact, the ExCom reacted in precisely this way. McNamara, for instance, had already begun moving beyond blockade to support direct military action. News of Khrushchev's Saturday letter pushed him further down that road. As he explained to his ExCom colleagues: "How can we negotiate with somebody who changes his deal before we even get a chance to reply, and announces publicly the deal before we receive it?"⁸⁸

Moreover, Khrushchev's maneuver created an even larger problem. The lengthy, discursive, personal Friday letter suggesting withdrawal of Soviet missiles for a non-invasion pledge was sent secretly and considered by the ExCom in secret. The Saturday letter not only changed the terms of the deal, demanding withdrawal of Turkish missiles as well, but it did so in a *public* message. That fact only made it almost impossible for his American counterparts to accept this compromise.

Why the Soviets made the Saturday proposal, and broadcast it publicly, remains unclear. The offer was almost certainly not dictated by military considerations. A public deal might save face, but not if the Americans rejected it—which almost any analyst would have predicted would happen. The Turks publicly rejected the trade just as the Americans started to discuss it. Castro expected the Americans to reject such a deal, and Alexeev reported to Moscow that he comforted Castro with that very point.⁸⁹ The fact that the offer was made publicly seems to have been incidental. Chapter 4 offers an organizational explanation, the new proposal broadcast over the radio simply in order to save the hours required by cumbersome transmission procedures.⁹⁰

Saturday, October 27, was the longest and most difficult day of the crisis. As the members of the ExCom gathered on Saturday morning to fashion a response to the secret Friday letter, they received notice that Kennedy was handed a news ticker summarizing a special message from Khrushchev demanding withdrawal of the Turkish missiles as the price for withdrawal of Soviet missiles in Cuba. When the entire text was received, and analyzed by the members of the ExCom during the hours that followed, they speculated about many possibilities, including the possibility that Khrushchev had been overruled by his colleagues in Moscow.

Having dictated the new message to Kennedy, offering the Turkey-Cuba trade, Khrushchev and his colleagues did have second thoughts about Plijev's dispersal of nuclear weapons. An order was quickly sent to the Soviet general reiterating that he should not use any nuclear weapons without express authorization from Moscow. Khrushchev also sent a message to Havana urging Alexeev to caution Castro against any rash actions.⁹¹

Soviets Kill an American U-2 Pilot

Castro had already ordered his air defense forces to start shooting at American planes entering Cuban airspace.⁹² He had discussed the plan with Soviet commanders on the scene. Alexeev had reported the matter to Moscow, and the commanders may have also reported it in military channels. On October 27, Khrushchev sent instructions to Alexeev suggesting that Castro rescind the order but by then it was too late, even if Castro had wanted to heed the advice.

In a full state of alarm over the expected attack, the Cubans fired first at American reconnaissance aircraft flying low-level missions within range of the Cuban anti-aircraft guns. At least one of the planes was hit, but not brought down. When a U-2 flew over, well beyond the range of any Cuban guns, it too was mistakenly perceived as a threat. Authority to fire had been delegated to Soviet field commanders in the event of an American attack. The local Soviet air defense officers, unable to consult with Plijev, chose to interpret their instructions liberally in order to assist their excited Cuban comrades.⁹³ A Soviet surface-to-air missile was fired. It hit the target, downed the U-2 and killed its pilot, Major Rudolph Anderson. Khrushchev did not grasp the fact that Soviet officers were responsible for this action until some time later. The next day Khrushchev sent a message to Castro that said "you shot down" one of the provocative American overflights, and Khrushchev warned Castro that such steps "will be used by aggressors to their advantage, to further their aims." At that time, Castro explained

that he had mobilized all his anti-aircraft batteries "to support the positions of the Soviet forces" and that "if we wanted to prevent the risk of a surprise attack, the crews had to have orders to shoot. Castro added that, "the Soviet Forces Command can give you further details on what happened with the plane that was shot down."⁹⁴

The episode was even more dangerous than Khrushchev knew. The U.S. government had already developed plans and issued orders that, if a U-2 was shot down, a retaliatory air strike would be launched against offending air defense sites within minutes. McNamara proposed a strike at dawn the next day. Kennedy still held back. But Kennedy was the exception. Kennedy's added caution could not have been anticipated. An analyst in Moscow should have anticipated an immediate retaliatory response. As one State official put it, "you could have an undisciplined anti-aircraft, Cuban anti-aircraft outfit, fire. But to have a SAM site, with a Russian crew, fire is not any accident."⁹⁵

The American official was right. The shootdown was no accident. Yet the action did not reflect the specific preferences of Khrushchev or the Soviet government. Nor had it simply been a matter of organizational routine. An explanation could only be found by exploring questions about the command environment in Cuba, the methods for communicating with higher authorities in Moscow, and the procedures that had been set in place for making military decisions in the field. The military officers probably thought they, or Alexeev on their behalf, had warned Moscow of what might happen in Alexeev's cable of October 25. Moscow had, it seemed, acquiesced. In their environment, a sense of solidarity with their Cuban counterparts was understandable. There was little time to decide, and they were unable to consult General Pliyev. So they acted, interpreting their orders. It is possible that President Kennedy, one of the few combat veterans sitting at the ExCom table, intuitively understood this possibility, and that may be one reason why he paused.

The President and the Chairman

President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev now faced supreme decisions.

Bullfight critics row on row,
Crowd the enormous plaza de toros
But only one is there who knows,
And he is the one who fights the bull.⁹⁶

There was more than irony in President Kennedy's recital of this poem in closing an off-the-record press conference on Tuesday, October 16. That was the day he learned the Soviets were installing

offensive missiles in Cuba. In the preceding 635 days as president Kennedy lived with the knowledge that at any moment he might make a personal judgment that would put half the world in jeopardy. Every day this responsibility weighed on his thoughts and his sleep. The experience of this burden separated him, and his needs, from those around him—even his closest advisers. They could know his burden intellectually; he experienced it emotionally. As he put it in his year-end interview for 1962, "The president bears the burden of responsibility. The advisers may move on to new advice."⁹⁷

Until October 1962, this weight hung around his neck as a prospective responsibility. Now events forced the nuclear toreador into the ring. What he experienced in those days we can only faintly imagine. The existential burden of responsibility for actually *making* judgments that might cause the quick death of millions of human beings must have been overwhelming. While he could involve others in the choice, he was responsible for the outcome. This qualitative difference in responsibility exaggerated the differences between his perspective and that of the men around him.

Perhaps only Kennedy's Soviet counterpart also knew what it was to be, in Richard Neustadt's apt phrase, a "Final Arbiter."⁹⁸ Khrushchev's statements about the crisis were, characteristically, more dramatic than Kennedy's. He recalled the "smell of scorching [that] hung in the air."⁹⁹ He warned Kennedy that if we "do not show wisdom . . . [we] will come to a clash, like *blind moles*, and then reciprocal extermination will begin." His secret October 26 letter concluded with the most penetrating metaphor of the crisis:

If, however, you have not lost your self-control and sensibly conceive what this might lead to, then, Mr. President, you and I ought not now to pull on the ends of the rope in which you have tied the *knots of war*, because the more the two of us pull, the tighter the knot will be tied. And a moment may come when that knot will be tied so tight that even he who tied it will not have the strength to untie it, and then it will be necessary to cut that knot, and what that would mean is not for me to explain to you, because you yourself understand perfectly of what terrible forces our countries dispose.¹⁰⁰

The nuclear crisis seems to have magnified both rulers' conceptions of the consequences of nuclear war, and each man's awareness of his special responsibility. This consciousness not only set each man apart from his associates, it set each apart in a way that left the two alone—together. For they were equally yoked with responsibility for irreparable consequences: either man could cause both to fail; each would have to cooperate if they were to succeed. Indeed, a central feature of

the crisis was the unchosen partnership between these two men in a game against nuclear disaster.

The "Deal": Resolving the Turkish Problem

Until October 27, President Kennedy felt no necessity to consult anyone beyond the ExCom in making these fateful choices. But when Khrushchev linked NATO's MRBMs in Turkey with Soviet missiles in Cuba, he widened the game. As Kennedy put it, "so far all that really gets involved are us, the Russians, and Cuba. Beginning with the offer on Turkey, then [the allies] are really in it."¹⁰¹ Because U.S. nuclear-armed missiles had been stationed in Turkey by a decision of the NATO alliance, NATO would have to decide to remove them.

Kennedy had no difficulty accepting the terms proposed by Khrushchev's Friday letter: pledging not to invade Cuba if missiles were dismantled. As he had said to Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko the prior week, the U.S. had "no intention to invade Cuba." But how to answer Saturday's proposal to trade NATO missiles in Turkey for Soviet missiles in Cuba—that was the problem. The U.S. could simply reject it, as many members of the ExCom urged. But Kennedy found that unacceptable. As a member of the group noted: "Day and night we've talked about this. And we've said we'd be delighted to trade those missiles in Turkey for the same in Cuba."¹⁰² Kennedy judged that, "we're going to be in an insupportable position [if we reject Khrushchev's proposition] . . . It is going to—to any man at the UN or any other rational man—it will look like a very fair trade."¹⁰³

If, on the other hand, the U.S. traded NATO missiles in Turkey for Soviet missiles, what about the consequences for the NATO alliance and for American commitments elsewhere around the world? As Bundy put it: a trade would make it "clear that we were trying to sell out our allies for our interests. This would be the view of all NATO. Now, it's irrational and crazy, but it is a *terribly* powerful fact."¹⁰⁴ Returning to the point, Bundy argued: "I think that if we sound as if we want to make this trade, to our NATO people and to all the people who are tied to us by alliance, we are in real trouble . . . I think we should tell you [Mr. President] that this is the universal assessment of everyone in the government that's connected with these alliance problems."¹⁰⁵

The struggle to avoid being impaled by one horn, or the other, of this dilemma made Saturday's deliberation the most intense and difficult of the crisis. Transcripts of those secret discussions allow a reader to become a fly on the wall, privy to the most intimate deliberations among leaders of a superpower contemplating war within the next 24 to 48 hours—a war most participants believed could escalate quickly

to nuclear war. As Sorensen recalled: "our little group, seated around the Cabinet table in continuous session that Saturday felt nuclear war to be closer on that day than at any time in the nuclear age."¹⁰⁶

The availability of such unusual evidence about an event of such consequence makes this a classic for students of high-level decision-making and diplomacy. From the outer shell of public pronouncements and spin, through successive layers of secret communication among adversaries and allies, secret deliberations within the U.S. government, and further secrets within subgroups in the U.S. government, one can unpack the *matryoshka*.^{*} Inside each circle, and between it and the others, one finds an exquisite blend of debate, disclosure, deception, reflection, and bargaining. It is difficult to review this record without coming to agree with Kennedy's insight that serves as the epigraph of this book. To understand the essence of ultimate decision would require penetrating the impenetrable.

President Kennedy becomes the driver of the debate. We see a president as analyst-in-chief. On each issue, he presses his colleagues to probe deeper implications of each option; to explore ways of circumventing seemingly insurmountable obstacles; to face squarely unpalatable tradeoffs; and to stretch their imagination. In Saturday's discussion, the group agreed quickly on one central conclusion: the Soviet rush to complete the missiles must cease immediately. Otherwise, their operational missiles would become a *fait accompli*. Saturday afternoon's news of the shootdown of the U-2 and firing upon low-level reconnaissance aircraft forced the U.S. to make the next move—now. If it retaliated against the sites that had fired the first shots, it would kill substantial numbers of Russian and Cuban soldiers. If it cancelled reconnaissance flights, it would be blind to fast-changing military developments at the sites essential for targeting their destruction. Thus, proposition one in the U.S. response demanded that work stop. That message was clear in Saturday morning's public statement, in a memo to U Thant of the UN, and in the formal response to Khrushchev.

Still more vexing was Khrushchev's demand that the U.S. sacrifice the Turkish missiles. Reviewing the Saturday afternoon debate, one finds a President who is not prepared to let the Turkish missiles come between him and a settlement that avoids war with the Soviet Union. He searches for every possible way to win the Turks' and NATO's agreement in advance. He is convinced that if NATO knew what the ExCom knew, and understood the real alternatives at this crossroads, it would agree to the trade. But as he and his colleagues explore ways to call a meeting of the NATO Council, or meet separately with the

Turkish Prime Minister, or even send an ultimatum to the Turkish Prime Minister, the president becomes convinced that there is no way to get to "yes" quickly enough.

In a marathon discussion that continues for almost four hours, Kennedy pushes his colleagues to think beyond the next move in the game:

What we don't want is for the deal to be turned down by them [NATO] without realizing that the turn-down puts us in the position of having to do something. What we are going to be faced with is that, because they wouldn't take the missiles out of Turkey, we are either going to have to invade or [have] a massive strike on Cuba which may lose Berlin. That's what concerns me.¹⁰⁷

Bundy objects: "If we appear to be trading the defense of Turkey for a threat to Cuba, we'll just have to face a radical decline in the effectiveness [of the NATO alliance]." Kennedy responds: "If we reject [the trade] out of hand and then have to take military action against Cuba, then we'll also face a decline [in the alliance]."¹⁰⁸

I'm just thinking about what we're going to have to do in a day or so, which is 500 sorties, in 7 days, and possibly an invasion, all because we wouldn't take the missiles out of Turkey.¹⁰⁹

We know how quickly everybody's courage goes out when the blood starts to flow, and that's what's going to happen to NATO. When we start these things and they [the Soviets] grab Berlin, everyone's going to say "well that [the trade for Turkish missiles] was a pretty good proposition."¹¹⁰

They're [the Turks] not going to want to do it, but we may just have to do it in our interest.¹¹¹

It's going to look like we're caving in... To get it done, you'd probably have to... take all the political effects of the cave-in of NATO.¹¹²

Some members of the ExCom found the President persuasive. McCone minced no words: "I would trade these Turkish things right out. I wouldn't be talking to anybody about it."¹¹³ The most ingenious support came from McNamara, who proposed that the U.S. unilaterally render the Jupiter missiles in Turkey "inoperable" in order to "minimize the Soviet response against NATO following a U.S. attack on Cuba."¹¹⁴ In an extraordinary analytic display, especially in the midst of an ongoing debate, he laid out his case in a series of specific propositions: (1) the Soviets have downed a U-2 and fired on U.S. surveillance aircraft over Cuba—the U.S. will have to respond by attacking SAMs and low-level groundfire in Cuba; (2) "that means 500 sorties at a

minimum"; (3) "if we do this and leave those missiles in Turkey, the Soviet Union may, and I think probably will, attack the Turkish missiles"; (4) "if the Soviet Union attacks the Turkish missiles, we must respond; the minimum response by NATO to a Soviet attack on Turkish Jupiter missiles would be a response with conventional weapons by NATO forces in Turkey"; and (5) "one way to avoid it is to defuse the Turkish missiles before we attacked Cuba."¹¹⁵

If this were the best way to protect Turkey, others asked, what about the consequences for Berlin? To this, McNamara had no reply.¹¹⁶

The participant who knew the Soviets best emerged as one of the strongest opponents of any such trade. As Thompson said plainly: "Mr. President, if we go on the basis of a trade, which I gather is somewhat in your mind, we end up, it seems to me, with the Soviets still in Cuba with planes and technicians and so on, even though the missiles are out. And that would surely be unacceptable and put you in a worse position."¹¹⁷ Thompson judged that Khrushchev had "upped the price, and they've upped the action"; that "he's now getting the idea that he can get a lot more"; that "any indication that we're going to accept anything on Turkey is clearly unacceptable" because it will signal weakness and encourage Khrushchev to demand more.¹¹⁸

After almost three hours, the deliberations approached stalemate. In Robert Kennedy's words:

There were sharp disagreements. Everyone was tense; some were already near exhaustion; all were weighted down with concern and worry... When we almost seemed unable to communicate with one another he [the President] suggested with a note of some exasperation that (inasmuch as I felt so strongly that the State Department's various efforts to respond were not satisfactory—Ted Sorensen and I should leave the meeting and go into his office and compose an alternative response.¹¹⁹

President Kennedy also left the room. When he, Robert Kennedy, and Sorensen returned, the president announced no decision, but nonetheless signaled his own conclusion: "We can't very well invade Cuba, with all the toil and blood it's going to be, when we could have gotten them [the Soviet missiles] out by making a deal on the same missiles in Turkey. If that's part of the record, then I don't see how we'll have a very good war."¹²⁰ Recognizing that many others in the room disagreed strongly, especially about the Turkish issue, he adjourned the meeting: "I think we've got two or three different proposals here. Can we meet at 9:00 PM and everybody can get a bite to eat."¹²¹

At 8:00 PM, the RFK-Sorensen draft of the public message to Khrushchev was simultaneously transmitted to Moscow and released to the press. According to this letter, "the first thing that needs to be done is for *work to cease* on offensive missile bases in Cuba, and for all weapons systems in Cuba capable of offensive use to be rendered inoperable, under effective UN arrangements." On the Turkish question, the letter said only that "if the first proposition were accepted, the effects of such a settlement on easing world tensions would enable us to work towards a more general agreement regarding other armaments as proposed in your second letter which you made public."¹²²

But as the meeting concluded, Kennedy invited a smaller group to join him in the Oval Office to discuss the message Robert Kennedy would convey personally to Ambassador Dobrynin. This "ExCom within the ExCom" went well beyond what had just been agreed. McGeorge Bundy summarized that meeting as follows:

A smaller group moved from the Cabinet room to the Oval Office to talk over the second means of communication—an oral message to be conveyed to Ambassador Dobrynin. [That group included Rusk, McNamara, Robert Kennedy, Ball, Gilpatric, Thompson, Sorensen, and Bundy.] One part of the oral message we discussed was simple, stern, and quickly decided—that the time had come to agree on the basis set out in the President's new letter: no Soviet missiles in Cuba, and no U.S. invasion. Otherwise, further American action was unavoidable... The other part of the oral message was... that we should tell Khrushchev that while there could be no deal over Turkish missiles, the President was determined to get them out and would do so once the Cuban crisis was resolved.¹²³

Bundy's next carefully chosen words reflect his unease: "Concerned as we all were by the costs of a public bargain struck under pressure at the apparent expense of the Turks, and aware as we were from the day's discussion that for some, *even in our closest councils*, even this unilateral private assurance might appear to betray an ally, we agreed without hesitation that no one not in the room was to be informed of this additional message."¹²⁴ Reflecting the contract implicit in the proposal, he added: "Robert Kennedy was instructed to make it plain to Dobrynin that the same secrecy must be observed on the other side, and that any Soviet reference to our assurance would simply make it null and void."

Robert Kennedy left immediately to meet Dobrynin at the Justice Department and deliver the private message. It was a masterful example of diplomatic doublespeak:

I told him that this [the U-2 shootdown] was an extremely serious turn in events. We would have to make certain decisions *within the next 12 or possibly 24 hours*... I said those missile bases had to go and they had to go right away. We had to have a commitment by at least tomorrow that those bases would be moved. This was not an ultimatum, I said, but just a statement of fact. He should understand that if they did not remove those bases, then we would remove them. His country might take retaliatory action, but he should understand that before this was over, while there might be dead Americans, there would also be dead Russians.

He then asked me about Khrushchev's other proposal dealing with removal of the missiles from Turkey. I replied that there could be no quid pro quo—no deal of this kind could be made... If some time elapsed—and... I mentioned *four or five months*—I said I was sure that these matters could be resolved satisfactorily.¹²⁵

Dobrynin heard the offer clearly and conveyed it to Moscow.¹²⁶

The "Deal": Resolving the Cuban Problem

Before the U.S. had to make the final decisions about military action, Khrushchev moved. Events of October 27, including the shootdown of a U-2 over Cuba and penetration of Soviet territory by another U-2, punctured any sense of complacency in Moscow. To make matters worse, a message from Castro reached Moscow early on the morning of Sunday, October 28 (Moscow time). In it, Castro wrote that an American attack in the next 24 to 72 hours "is almost inevitable," probably a massive air strike, but possibly an invasion. If the Americans did invade, Castro urged Khrushchev to consider "elimination of such a danger," by using Soviet nuclear weapons against the Americans. "However difficult and horrifying this decision may be," Castro wrote, "there is, I believe, no other recourse."¹²⁷

Alexeev also reported back Castro's reaction to the Soviet public proposal of October 27. Castro felt sure the Americans would reject it. While reassuring his Cuban colleagues there was no danger that the Soviets would reject their "obligations," Alexeev reminded Castro that "in the present circumstances it would not be fitting to aggravate the situation and initiate provocations." Castro said he understood, but that "considering the rise in the army's martial spirit and the Americans' warning, our friends were compelled to take such a step."¹²⁸

Khrushchev appears to have been alarmed by the message from Castro urging him to use nuclear weapons against America. In a subsequent message to Castro, he referred to this "very alarming" message in which "you proposed that we be the first to carry out a nuclear strike against the enemy's territory." "Naturally," Khrushchev added,

"you understand where that would lead us. It would not be a simple strike, but the start of a thermonuclear world war."¹²⁹

Kennedy's terse, public message reached Khrushchev on Sunday morning, October 28, in Moscow. It insisted that the Soviets withdraw their missiles from Cuba and offered in exchange a lifting of the quarantine and pledge not to invade Cuba. Khrushchev opened the special session of the Presidium at noon on October 28 with a very different assessment from the day before. He warned his colleagues that they were "face to face with the danger of war and of nuclear catastrophe, with the possible result of destroying the human race." He went on, "In order to save the world, we must retreat."¹³⁰

After this opening statement, but before Khrushchev had proposed specific terms of retreat, Dobrynin's cable of his conversation with Robert Kennedy arrived. It conveyed both the threat and the concession. Specifically, the cable stated: "The USA government is determined to get rid of those bases—up to, in the extreme case, of bombing them," unless the Soviet Union agreed to "halt further work on the construction of missile bases in Cuba and take measures under international control that would make it impossible to use these weapons The president doesn't see any insurmountable difficulties in resolving this issue [of withdrawing U.S. missiles from Turkey]. We need 4-5 months, taking into account the procedures that exist within the NATO framework." According to Dobrynin's cable, Robert Kennedy ended the conversation by emphasizing that "The current situation, unfortunately, is such that there is very little time to resolve this whole issue. Unfortunately, events are developing too quickly." Dobrynin concluded with the comment, "I should say that during our meeting R. Kennedy was very upset; in any case, I've never seen him like this before. He didn't even try to get into fights on various subjects, as he usually does, and only persistently returned to one topic: time is of the essence and we shouldn't miss the chance."¹³¹ This report from Washington stiffened Khrushchev and his Presidium's inclination to say "da" and to say it quickly.

A report that at 5:00 P.M. Moscow time (or 9:00 A.M. in Washington), Kennedy would be making another speech to the American people fueled fears that an American military action was imminent. Apparently the report was a rebroadcast of Kennedy's October 22 speech. An urgent, conciliatory message agreeing to "dismantle the arms which you describe as offensive and to crate them and return them to the Soviet Union" was prepared and hurriedly broadcast over the radio to be sure it reached Washington in time.

In the aftermath of the crisis, Kennedy's final move was characterized as a "Trollope Ploy," recalling a recurring scene in the writings of that Victorian novelist in which an eager maiden interprets a squeeze of her hand as a proposal of marriage. In the light of the evidence from the Soviet files, however, a more apt analogy is *Rashoman*, Kurasawa's classic film in which a bandit appears intent upon raping a maiden who is seeking to seduce him. To end this crisis, Kennedy was prepared to pay more, and Khrushchev to accept less, than the other required or understood. Kennedy offered the Turkish missiles, but before Khrushchev learned that Kennedy had sweetened his offer, he had chosen to withdraw Soviet missiles from Cuba in exchange for a noninvasion pledge alone.

As Radio Moscow was broadcasting the public message, two further messages were rushed to Dobrynin in Washington, saying "quickly get in touch with R. Kennedy" and pass on the following "urgent response: 'The thoughts which R. Kennedy expressed at the instruction of the President finds understanding in Moscow. Today, an answer will be given by radio . . . and that response will be the most favorable.'" A second message said: "In my letter to you of October 28, which was designed for publication, I did not touch on this matter because of your wish, as conveyed by Robert Kennedy. But all of the offers, which were included in this letter, were given on account of your having agreed to the Turkish issue raised in my letter of October 27 and announced by Robert Kennedy, from your side, in his meeting with the Soviet ambassador that same day."¹³²

There had been no time to consult with Castro. He learned of Khrushchev's decision from the radio, along with the rest of the world. Pliyev was chided for having been in such a "hurry" to shoot down the U-2. All Soviet jets were to be grounded to avoid any more clashes.¹³³

With Khrushchev's announcement that the missiles would be withdrawn, the moment of maximum tension passed. But the crisis was not over. For several days thereafter, the evidence was ambiguous. Low-level reconnaissance missions of October 29 appeared to show that construction was actually continuing. The Joint Chiefs of Staff argued that Khrushchev's move was a ruse to delay American action. Meanwhile U Thant pressured the United States not to conduct any more surveillance while he was visiting Havana and arranging UN inspection of the missiles and their removal.

Kennedy found his position awkward. The public thought the crisis was essentially over, and expected proof of the missiles being pulled out. There was no such proof to give them. Kennedy had little evidence beyond his own belief that Khrushchev was sincere, a belief

fortunately reinforced by intelligence about Cuban and Chinese anger at what they seemed to regard as a Soviet betrayal.

Dobrynin delivered Khrushchev's second, private letter referring to the Turkish missiles to Robert Kennedy on October 29. The next day he was recalled by the younger Kennedy who, in effect, flung the letter back in the ambassador's face. That day, Robert Kennedy jotted down that he said: "No quid pro quo as I told you. The letter makes it appear that there was." The missiles would leave Turkey. "You have my word on this and that is sufficient. . . ; if you should publish any document indicating a deal then it is off." Dobrynin promised that nothing would be published. He took the letter back and the U.S. government kept no record of ever receiving it.¹³⁴

On October 30, Khrushchev sent another letter to Kennedy omitting any mention of the Jupiters and treating the crisis as settled. Saying that he was interested in the "remnants of the dangerous crisis which you and we have in the main liquidated,"¹³⁵ Khrushchev asked for immediate removal of the quarantine and hoped Kennedy might consider giving up the American base at Guantanamo. But the tone of the letter was friendly. "You evidently held to a restraining position with regard to those forces which suffered from militaristic itching," Khrushchev added. "We found a reasonable compromise" and "evidently, your role here was restraining."

Kennedy remained wary, reviewing the invasion planning, holding all military preparations in place, and resuming U.S. air surveillance as soon as possible. As McNamara and others had expected, U Thant's mission had produced no mechanism for UN inspection. Castro refused to play his part in the deal; he would not cooperate in any verification regime or aerial inspection on the island of Cuba.¹³⁶ The alternative to a UN regime was, of course, American surveillance—which raised the familiar concerns in Washington about planning to attack Cuba if a plane was shot down. Fortunately, on November 1 the U.S. surveillance aircraft detected positive signs that missiles were being prepared for removal from Cuba. Both U-2 and low-level reconnaissance flights continued in November.

Meanwhile, the American negotiating team in New York found that the Soviet negotiator did not count the IL-28 bombers as offensive weapons. At the beginning of October, the Kennedy administration had been willing to overlook the aircraft rather than provoke a crisis. Now they had become part of the threat Kennedy had publicly pledged to erase.

The two problems, lack of verification and the status of the IL-28s, were the principal issues as talks dragged on in New York through the month of November.

These issues were essentially resolved with an outcome that was announced by President Kennedy at a press conference on November 20. The IL-28s would come out of Cuba within 30 days. There would be no UN inspection regime, but U.S. forces would be allowed to observe the departing Soviet ships, whose cargoes would be made visible to such scrutiny. America would use its own reconnaissance methods to monitor compliance in Cuba. The blockade would finally be lifted. American forces mobilized in higher defense readiness would return to normal peacetime deployments. The Strategic Air Command would end its airborne alert.

Left less clear at President Kennedy's press conference, except for those who studied his words with care, was the status of the original October 27–28 deal which traded verified withdrawal of Soviet "offensive weapons" for an American pledge not to invade Cuba. The U.S. government had concluded that if Cuba would not allow verification of the settlement, the Cuban part of the deal was off. There would be no noninvasion pledge beyond the safeguards any country enjoyed under international law. President Kennedy told Soviet envoy Anastas Mikoyan directly that if the original agreement with UN inspection was not upheld to the letter, then the U.S. president "can only act in the best way the situation permits."¹³⁷

But Kennedy was no more anxious to invade Cuba than he had been six months earlier. The Americans and Soviets had cobbled together a new deal which was even more one-sided and did not require Cuban cooperation. The Soviets also instructed their forces in Cuba not to shoot down any American reconnaissance aircraft. Periodic U-2 flights continued until satellite photography took their place. U.S. forces remained poised to attack Cuban antiaircraft sites if an American plane was shot down.¹³⁸

By the summer of 1963, the CIA operations against Castro had returned to about what they had been in the summer of 1962, before the Soviet arms shipments began. Washington was again back to a policy judged to have low risk and a low return—petty harassment that was probably not enough to bring down Castro, but also not enough to drag the United States into an open or direct intervention in Cuba.

Also left out of Kennedy's November 20 press conference was any discussion of the Jupiter missiles. The matter was not forgotten, but was handled by the Americans in the proper channel, through NATO,

as part of broader reviews of NATO nuclear force posture and possible creation of a multilateral NATO nuclear force. Rusk and McNamara discussed the plan with their Turkish and Italian counterparts during the next meeting of NATO ministers, in Paris in December 1962. It was a meeting marked, as one delegate put it, by an almost "intolerable serenity," amid deep satisfaction with American management of the Cuban crisis. Out of the public spotlight, in the warm atmosphere of success, the Turks became relaxed about the possible replacement of the Jupiter missiles with a more modern NATO deterrent.¹³⁹ The Jupiters were dismantled by the end of April 1963. A Polaris missile submarine took up station in the Mediterranean. All the "missiles of October" were gone.

NOTES

1. Robert Kennedy interview, quoted by Ronald Steel, *New York Review of Books*, March 13, 1969, p. 22.
 2. The information in Figure 2 is drawn principally from Merle Fainsod, *How Russia Is Ruled*, rev. ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) leavened by consultation with Timothy Naftali. The portrait in Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *"One Hell of a Gamble": Khrushchev, Castro and Kennedy 1958–1964* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), describes crisis decision-making by Khrushchev in direct consultation principally with the members (full members, not candidate members) of the Presidium and one nonmember, Malinovsky. Though Semichastny has mentioned a "special group" formed by the Presidium that worked "day and night" during the crisis, we have no information on the composition of this group and cannot evaluate the significance of its work. Interview with Vladimir Semichastny, 29 August 1995. We have omitted officials who played only a staff role with no active participation in Kremlin decisionmaking even though some of them, such as Oleg Troyanovsky on the Soviet side, became valuable much later as sources for what transpired.
 3. Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), p. 29. The two most thorough post-mortems on the performance of the intelligence community in the crisis were done internally by the CIA and, separately, by the president's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB), chaired by James Killian. The Killian report praised the intelligence community's crisis performance but was sharply critical of its precrisis work. The CIA study, supervised by McCone, must be the one Robert Kennedy was thinking of, since it concluded that "photography obtained prior to about 17 October would not have been sufficient to warrant action of a type which would require support from Western Hemisphere [or] NATO allies." In other words, the construction was detected only at about the time its dangers were manifest and demonstrable to others.
 4. Yet McCone had also explained candidly to the president that, on balance, aerial surveillance of Cuba had not been pressed urgently enough and that analysts had been too ready to discount the possibility of missiles being deployed. McCone's judgment shaped a consensus joined, at the time however grudgingly, by Bundy, McNamara, and Rusk. For the Killian report and the CIA study, see PFIAB to President Kennedy, 4 February 1963; McCone to President Kennedy, 28 February 1963, both in *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp. 361–71, pp. 373–76. For the summarized consensus, see Bundy to Rusk, McNamara, and McCone, 19 February 1963, in *FRUS: Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*, vol. 11, pp. 702–05; and, for more candid insight on McCone's views (as expressed to President Kennedy but not put down in a memo for circulation around the White House), see also McCone to Record, "Meeting with the President in Palm Beach, Florida—9:45 A.M.—Saturday—5 January 1963," 7 January 1963; and McCone to the Record, "Meeting with the President—4:30 P.M.—4 March 1963," 4 March 1963, in *ibid.*, pp. 651–53, 713–14.
 5. Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 675.
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 670.
 7. Ernest May and Philip Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 91.
 8. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 670.
 9. *Ibid.*, pp. 669 ff; see also, on Keating's activities, Mark J. White, *The Cuban Missile Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 89–114.
 10. Interview with Sorensen by Carl Kaysen, 15 April 1964, John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Project, JFKL, pp. 52, 60, 64. Winston Churchill was then known to all as the statesman who had warned prophetically, in the 1930s, about the coming conflict with Hitler's Germany.
 11. On the status of Mongoose in the spring of 1962, see, e.g., "Guidelines for Operation Mongoose," 14 March 1962; Harvey to McCone, "Operation Mongoose," 10 April 1962, both in *FRUS: Cuba, 1961–1962*, vol. 10, pp. 771–72, 786–90. On assassination attempts, see Edwards to Record (and Robert Kennedy), "Arthur James Balletti et al—Unauthorized Publication or Use of Communications," 14 May 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 807–09.
- On President Kennedy's (and, echoing him, Bundy's) plain refusal to make the desired commitment to a U.S. invasion, see U. Alexis Johnson notes accompanying, "Guidelines for Operation Mongoose," 16 March 1962, in *ibid.*, note on p. 771; Memcon for Bundy meeting with Cuban exile leaders, "Cuba," 29 March 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 777–78; Hurwitch to Martin, "The Cuban Exile Community, the Cuban Revolutionary Council, and Dr. Miro Cardona," 19 April 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 797–98; and Passavoy to Record, "Topics Discussed during Meeting of Dr. Miro Cardona with the President," 25 April 1962 and Goodwin to President Kennedy, 14 April 1963 (describing the same 1962 meeting), both in National Security Files, Box 45, Cuba: Subjects, Miro Cardona, Material Sent to Palm Beach, in JFKL. Others present at President

- Kennedy's meeting with Miro Cardona were Ernesto Aragon, Robert Kennedy, and Richard Goodwin.
12. See Joint Staff paper, "Blockade of Cuba in Reprisal for Soviet Actions in Berlin," DJSM-572-62, 1 May 1962, in *FRUS Cuba 1961-1962*, vol. 10, pp. 801-02.
 13. Lansdale (?) to Special Group (Augmented), "US Policy in the Event USSR Establishes a Base(s) in Cuba," 31 May 1962, in *ibid.*, p. 824; see also Lansdale to Special Group (Augmented), "Status of Requested Studies, Operation Mongoose," 8 June 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 828-29.
 14. The Special Group (Augmented) was chaired by Robert Kennedy. The senior representatives to it were usually Taylor (then the president's military representative) and Bundy for the White House, U. Alexis Johnson from State, Gilpatric for Defense, and McCone himself or Richard Helms from the CIA. Key action officers for Mongoose were William Harvey at the CIA, Robert Hurwitch at State, and General Benjamin Harris at Defense. The Mongoose program was directed by Edward Lansdale.
 15. Hurwitch paper, "Political and Economic," 7 August 1962, attachment to Lansdale to Special Group (Augmented), "Stepped Up Course B," 8 August 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 899-917.
 16. State paper, "Thoughts for 2:30 Meeting," 10 August 1962, in *ibid.*, p. 923.
 17. At the August 10 review, McNamara raised the idea of assassinating Castro, and it was firmly quashed. See Taylor to President Kennedy, 17 August 1962 ("there is no reason to hope that it will cause the overthrow of the regime from within"); see also Editorial Note and Lansdale to Special Group (Augmented), "Alternate Course B," 14 August 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 944-45, 923-24, 928-29; see also McCone's revealing complaints in McCone to Record, "Memorandum of Meeting . . .," 16 August 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 940-41.
 18. President Kennedy recorded some or all of the meeting, but as of August 1998 the recording had not yet been declassified.
 19. See McCone's record of the meetings on August 21 (at State) and August 23 (at the White House) and NSAM 181, in *ibid.*, pp. 947-49, 953-55, 957-58.
 20. In 1965 Robert Kennedy recalled that "I had a very good personal relationship with John McCone. . . . He liked Ethel very much because, when his wife died, Ethel went over and stayed with him. So he had a good deal of feeling for us, and I think he liked the President very much. But he liked one person more—and that was John McCone." Interview with Arthur Schlesinger, JFKL Oral History Project, in Edwin O. Guthman and Jeffrey Shulman, eds., *Robert Kennedy: In His Own Words* (New York: Bantam, 1988), p. 14. As Robert Kennedy explains, this account was already colored by some bitterness because, when the Cuban missile crisis was over, McCone carefully (and accurately) deflected blame for an intelligence failure by reminding people of his own prescience. During this period, in early 1963, McCone's long-standing tension with McNamara flared into more open conflict. To Robert Kennedy, the episode showed that McCone was not really *loyal*, a cardinal virtue. (In the same oral history, and other sources, Robert Kennedy repeatedly denied that McCone had accurately predicted the Soviet missile deployment, denials that were untrue.) So the reader should take the 1965 recollection of close friendship, and imagine the quality of the friendship before the divisive events.
 21. At the August 10 meeting McCone reportedly said (to McNamara), "The subject you just brought up. I think it is highly improper. I do not think it should be discussed. It is not an action that should ever be condoned. It is not proper for us to discuss and I intend to have it expunged from the record." McCone is also remembered to have told McNamara that "I could get excommunicated" for such actions. Church Committee testimony of Walt Elder and others, quoted in Richard Reeves, *President Kennedy: Profile of Power* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1993), pp. 337, 713; see also Ray Cline's recollection in Michael R. Beschloss, *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev 1960-1963* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), pp. 417-18.
- The best evidence to date on plotting to assassinate Castro appears to indicate that the idea germinated at the end of the Eisenhower administration, though those involved at the CIA did not want to tell their bosses much about it, thinking (rightly or wrongly) that their bosses did not want to know much about it. It is not clear that Allen Dulles or Eisenhower actually authorized attempts to assassinate Castro before Kennedy took office. The operation to approach mobsters for help had fizzled by early 1962. Robert Kennedy was reportedly angry about cooperating with such criminals, so that stopped. But Robert Kennedy, and President Kennedy, were apparently willing to support an assassination operation, as they had been since taking office. Only circumstantial evidence, however, links President Kennedy to such activities. CIA operatives, led by Richard Helms and William Harvey, worked the problem on their own in 1962 and 1963, but they say they did this working directly for Robert Kennedy, without telling McCone. Direct CIA planning to arrange the assassination of Castro ended when Lyndon Johnson took office. The evidence gathered by the Church Committee in 1975 has generally stood the test of time and subsequent disclosures. See *Alleged Assassination Plots Involving Foreign Leaders: Interim Report of the Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1976). For a good summary of the evidence on Castro, see John Ranelagh, *The Agency: The Rise and Decline of the CIA*, rev. ed. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), pp. 383-90; see also Peter Grose, *Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles*, pbk ed. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), pp. 493-95, 500-06.
22. Kirkpatrick to McCone, "Action Generated by DCI Cables Concerning Cuban Low-Level Photography and Offensive Weapons," n.d.; Tidwell to Record, "Instructions Concerning the Handling of Certain Information Concerning Cuba," 1 September 1962, in *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp. 39, 33 (both on President Kennedy's talk with Marshall Carter on August 31).
 23. Bundy to President Kennedy, "Cuba," 31 August 1962, in *FRUS: Cuba 1961-1962*, vol. 10, pp. 1002-06. "In sum," the analysis concluded, "the

expectation is that any missiles will have a substantial political and psychological impact, while surface-to-surface missiles would create a condition of great alarm, even in the absence of proof that nuclear warheads were arriving with them." Such missiles would, Bundy noted in his cover memo, be a matter of "elemental national security. It is not the same as missiles in Turkey. . . . I myself believe that if we make it clear that short of war we have done everything we can and that war is not justified by anti-aircraft installations, we shall be on fairly solid ground."

24. *New York Times*, August 30, 1962.
25. *New York Times*, September 5, 1962.
26. Bundy to President Kennedy, "Memorandum on Cuba for the Press Conference," 13 September 1962, in National Security Files, JFKL.
27. McCone to Record, "Meeting with President—4:30 P.M.—4 March 1963," 4 March 1963, in *FRUS: Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*, vol. 11, p. 714.
28. May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 92.
29. Kirkpatrick to McCone, "Action Generated by DCI Cables . . . Concerning Cuban Low-Level Photography and Offensive Weapons," undated, in *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp. 39, 40.
30. For more on the September 7 White House briefing (which he dates on September 6) and the aftermath, see Dino A. Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball: The Inside Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, ed. Robert McCort, rev. ed. (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 122–128.
31. On the September 10 meeting, see Berkaw to Elder, 28 February 1963, "Genesis of White House Meeting on 10 September," in *FRUS: Cuba 1961–1962*, vol. 10, pp. 1054–55; Kirkpatrick to McCone, "White House Meeting on 10 September 1962 on Cuban Overflights," 1 March 1963, in *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp. 61–62.
32. Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, pp. 139–40, 151.
33. *Ibid.*, pp. 153–55.
34. On September 27, McCone and Robert Kennedy had a private conversation with President Kennedy about Cuba, but the content remains unknown. Kaysen to Record, 27 September 1962, in *FRUS: Cuba 1961–1962*, vol. 10, pp. 1094–95. For Ball's testimony, see Hearings before the House Select Committee on Export Control, 87th Cong., 2d sess., 1963, p. 811.
35. The idea of mining Cuban harbors was raised again during the first day of crisis deliberations on October 16. Bundy brought it up, possibly in order to get the idea killed once it was considered by new people in a new context. If that was his goal, he succeeded. See May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 103.
36. As a sampling of participation at this level of the Special Group (Augmented), the October 4 meeting attendees were Robert Kennedy (chair), McCone, Gilpatric, Alexis Johnson, Taylor, deputy CIA director Carter, Herbert "Pete" Scoville (CIA), Lansdale, and Colonel Ralph Steakley. Both Scoville and Steakley were there to comment on aerial surveillance issues. See McCone to Record, "Memorandum of Mongoose Meeting Held on Thursday, October 4, 1962," 4 October 1962; McCone to Record, "Memorandum of

Discussion with McGeorge Bundy Friday, October 5, 1962, 5:15 P.M.," both in *CIA Documents*, pp. 111–17; and Brugioni, *Eyeball to Eyeball*, pp. 159–64.

37. Kennedy met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff on September 14 and was already wondering about the feasibility of an air strike against SAM sites. On September 21, he reminded McNamara about the need to keep the plans up to date. On October 2, prodded by the Chiefs, McNamara offered them an expansive list of contingencies for possible action, led by a move on Berlin or the Soviet deployment of "offensive" systems to the island. See Kennedy to McNamara, 21 September 1962, in *FRUS: Cuba 1961–1962*, vol. 10, p. 1081; McNamara to Taylor, 2 October 1962, in *FRUS 1961–1963: Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*, vol. 11, pp. 6–7.
38. McCone to Record, "Memorandum on Donovan Project," 11 October 1962, in *FRUS: Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*, vol. 11, p. 18.
39. Quoted in Elie Abel, *The Missile Crisis* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1966), p. 13 (emphasis added).
40. *New York Times*, October 14, 1962.
41. Edwin McCammon Martin, *Kennedy and Latin America* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1994), pp. 399–400; Roger Hilsman, *To Move A Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (New York: Doubleday, 1967), p. 194.
42. See Richard Neustadt, "Afterword: 1964," *Presidential Powers*, 2d ed. (New York: John Wiley, 1964), p. 187. For an extreme version of this argument, see I.F. Stone, "The Brink," *New York Review of Books*, April 14, 1966.
43. And not just from his seat. Douglas Dillon, a Republican member of the cabinet, passed a blunt note across the table to Sorensen at one ExCom meeting (probably on October 21): "Have you considered the very real possibility that if we allow Cuba to complete installation and operational readiness of missile bases, the next House of Representatives is likely to have a Republican majority? This would completely paralyze our ability to react sensibly and coherently to further Soviet advances." Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 688 (the original note is preserved in the JFKL). On the broader point about the blurry distinction between presidential and national interests, see Richard Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, 1990 ed. (New York: Free Press, 1990), pp. 155–56.
44. May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 342.
45. *Ibid.*, pp. 59, 85.
46. On the reactions to McNamara's perceived exaggerations, see, for example, *ibid.*, p. 98; for the quotations see *ibid.*, p. 113–14.
47. Patrick Anderson, *The President's Men* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 270.
48. After the crisis Bundy also recorded the recollection that, in supporting an air strike, he was playing the role of devil's advocate, on instruction from the president. He said that Kennedy, just before departing on October 19 for his campaign trip, asked him to keep the air strike option open until Kennedy returned. Notes excerpted from Bundy's private papers by Francis Bator and shared in a letter to Zelikow and Ernest May, April 1998.

49. White House meeting at 11:00 A.M., October 18, in May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 149, 145.
50. This is how Kennedy summarized Lovett's argument in dictating a brief account of the late night White House meeting on October 18. *Ibid.*, p. 172. Kennedy at the time recalled Lovett not being convinced that any action was desirable. Kennedy may have remembered the argument better than he remembered C.S. Lovett's conclusion (or the discussion may have confused Lovett's conclusion from the Berlin argument with the different conclusion Bundy had reached—at that time—from the same argument). Two years later, Lovett recalled having advocated the blockade/ultimatum approach, rather than the option of doing nothing and Lovett's account seems credible to us. Lovett interviewed by Dorothy Fosdick for JFKL Oral History Project, November 19, 1964, relevant portion reprinted in *ibid.*, pp. 169–71.
51. See *ibid.*, pp. 171–72, 17–77.
52. If the U.S. message simply demanded withdrawal of the missiles, Khrushchev could equivocate while the missiles became operational. If the message threatened military action on a specific date unless the missiles were withdrawn, Khrushchev could counteroffer with another date, or ask for a summit meeting, and then the U.S. would appear to be spurning negotiations. Or Khrushchev might resent the tone of such a specific ultimatum so much that it would harden his resistance and make war more likely. Sorensen, who struggled with the task of how to draft an appropriate ultimatum, remembered that such a specific demand would constitute "the kind of ultimatum which no great power could accept." Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 685. Readers who may recall the Bush administration's use of such a time-specific ultimatum to Saddam Hussein before the Persian Gulf War may infer, correctly, that the Bush administration neither expected nor wholly wanted Iraq to accept it. By late 1990, many officials in the Bush administration had become convinced that the U.S. needed, somehow, to find a way to take violent action that would cripple Iraq's war machine and development of weapons of mass destruction.
53. Thompson in the 11:00 A.M. meeting on October 18, in May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 137. Dillon had first described the blockade/ultimatum concept in a memo sent to Kennedy late on October 17. "Memorandum for the President," reprinted in Laurence Chang and Peter Kornbluh, eds., *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (New York: New Press, 1992), pp. 116–18.
54. May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 178; Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 692.
55. There are several sources for the October 19 meetings, but the quotations are from minutes prepared by Deputy State Department Legal Adviser Leonard Meeker, in *FRUS 1961–1963: Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*, vol. 11, pp. 116–22.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*; Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 692.
58. This and the following discussion of the meeting is drawn from Minutes of the 505th Meeting of the National Security Council, October 20, 1962, 2:30–5:10 P.M., in *FRUS 1961–1963: Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*, vol. 11, pp. 126–36.
59. McCone to File, October 20, 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 137–38.
60. This and subsequent descriptions are from Minutes of the 506th Meeting of the National Security Council, October 21, 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 141–49.
61. Robert Kennedy's phrase, in a meeting on the morning of October 21 with the Air Force strike planner, General Walter Sweeney, was to start with the blockade and thereafter "play for the breaks." McNamara, "Notes of October 21, 1962 Meeting with the President," reprinted in Chang and Kornbluh, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp. 144–45.
62. The metaphor of hawks and doves may have been coined by McGeorge Bundy, who used it in an ExCom meeting on October 28, and it then passed into general circulation by Joseph Alsop and Charles Bartlett in their *Saturday Evening Post* article of December 8, 1962, the first to portray the crisis with considerable aid (and steering) from the Kennedy White House. For Bundy's comment, see May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 635; see also Abel, *The Missile Crisis*, p. 70.
63. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, p. 46.
64. Abel, *The Missile Crisis*, p. 58.
65. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, p. 46.
66. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 679.
67. Abel, *The Missile Crisis*, p. 58. This latter participant went on to say, "This had a healthy effect in stimulating real discussion. It inhibited the striking of attitudes. Having him there in the conference room was perhaps better, because it was less inhibiting, than having the President there."
68. Oleg Troyanovsky, "The Caribbean Crisis: A View from the Kremlin," *International Affairs* (Moscow), April–May 1992, p. 150.
69. Gromyko cabled report to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, 19 October 1962, in *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 5 (Spring 1995), pp. 66–67; see also the gloating tone and complete misreading of both Kennedy and Rusk apparent in the final paragraph of Gromyko's longer report on his conversation with Rusk, Gromyko to Central Committee, 20 October 1962, in *ibid.*, p. 69.
70. Georgi Kornienko quoted in Vladislav M. Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 266.
71. Aleksander Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble": *Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), pp. 238–39, 245–46.
72. *Ibid.*, pp. 240–41, superseding the account in Anatoli Gribkov, "The View from Moscow and Havana," in Gribkov and William Y. Smith, *Operation ANADYR: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis*, ed. Alfred Friendly, Jr. (Chicago: Edition q, 1994), p. 62.
73. Fursenko and Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble", pp. 247–48; Troyanovsky, "The Caribbean Crisis," p. 152.
74. Gribkov, "The View from Moscow and Havana," pp. 45–46.

75. For McCone's report on Soviet signal traffic to these ships at midmorning (Moscow time) on October 24, see May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 348.
76. Fursenko and Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble", pp. 252–53.
77. May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 421.
78. Fursenko and Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble", pp. 257–58.
79. Ibid., pp. 255–56, 258–60.
80. Alexeev to Foreign Ministry, October 25, 1962, CWIHP/Harvard Collection.
81. Fursenko and Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble", p. 261; for the McNamara comments see May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, pp. 495, 585.
82. Zorin to Foreign Ministry, 27 October 1962, in CWIHP/Harvard Collection.
83. See Richard Ned Lebow and Janice Gross Stein, *We All Lost the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 115; Raymond L. Garthoff, *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, rev. ed., (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1989), p. 67 n. 107.
84. Fursenko and Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble", pp. 269–71.
85. Ibid., p. 272.
86. Johnson, on October 27, in May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 582.
87. Troyanovsky, "The Caribbean Crisis," p. 153.
88. May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 509.
89. Havana to Moscow, 27 October 1962, in CWIHP Collection.
90. Troyanovsky, "The Caribbean Crisis," p. 153.
91. Gribkov, "The View from Moscow and Havana," p. 63; Fursenko and Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble," pp. 274–75.
92. Fursenko and Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble", p. 266.
93. See Alexeev in Bruce J. Allyn, James G. Blight, and David Welch, eds., *Back to the Brink: Proceedings of the Moscow Conference on the Cuban Missile Crisis, January 27–28, 1989*, CSIA Occasional Paper no. 9 (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), p. 30; Garthoff, *Reflections on the Cuban Missile Crisis*, pp. 84–85.
94. Khrushchev to Castro, 28 October 1962 and Castro to Khrushchev, 28 October 1962. This correspondence was published by the Cuban government in 1990 and Soviet sources verified its accuracy. Copies are available from JFKL. Castro's fears were not unwarranted. McNamara had explained on October 26 how the U.S. might use its low-level reconnaissance flights to help pave the way for an air strike.
95. U. Alexis Johnson in May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 576.
96. Robert Graves, from his *Oxford Address on Poetry*, cited in Abel, *The Missile Crisis*, p. 54.
97. *Washington Post*, December 18, 1962.
98. Neustadt, *Presidential Power and the Modern Presidents*, p. 182.
99. "Khrushchev's Report on the International Situation—I," *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol. 14, no. 51, January 16, 1963, p. 7.
100. Khrushchev letter of October 26, as received in the White House, reprinted in Larson, "Cuban Crisis," pp. 175–80.
101. May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 619. On the meeting with Gromyko, see the State Department memorandum of conversation, 18 October 1962, in Cuban Missile Crisis Files, 1992 Releases Box, National Security Archive, Washington, DC
102. Ibid., p. 582.
103. Ibid., p. 498.
104. Ibid., p. 500.
105. Ibid., p. 529.
106. Sorensen, *Kennedy*, p. 714.
107. May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 546.
108. Ibid., p. 530.
109. Ibid., p. 548.
110. Ibid., p. 548.
111. Ibid., p. 568.
112. Ibid., p. 564.
113. Ibid., p. 585. Minutes later, McCone put his point even more clearly: "I wouldn't try to negotiate a deal. I would send him a threatening letter. I'd say: you made public an offer. Now we'll accept that offer. But you shot down planes today before we even had a chance to send you a letter... Now we're telling you, Mr. Khrushchev, that we are sending unarmed planes over Cuba. If one of them is shot down, we're going to take your installations out, and you can expect it. And therefore, you issue an order immediately." p. 586.
114. Ibid., p. 538.
115. Ibid., pp. 580–581.
116. Ibid., p. 582. Vice President Johnson raised a further objection: "If you're willing to give up your missiles in Turkey... why don't you say that to him and say we're cutting a trade there [and] save all the invasion, lives, and everything else?"
117. Ibid., p. 548.
118. Ibid., p. 599. In Thompson's view, U.S. demands for withdrawal of Soviet bombers or technicians would be met by demands for equivalent withdrawals of NATO equipment from Turkey, which was unacceptable: "This is missile for missile, and technician for technician, and plane for plane." (p. 597.) Dillon clarified Thompson's concern about Khrushchev's escalating demands as follows: "Oh, I see what you are talking about. A week ago, it was that they'd take everything out of Cuba and we'd just take the missiles out of Turkey, whereas now he's [going to be] saying: 'I'll take the missiles out of Cuba. You take missiles out of here. I take airplanes out. You take airplanes out.'" (p. 592.)
119. Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, p. 102.
120. May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 262.
121. Ibid., p. 603.
122. Ibid., p. 604.
123. McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices about the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988), pp. 432–433.

124. May and Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes*, p. 606, emphasis added. The idea Rusk proposed had originally been suggested by U.S. ambassador to Turkey Raymond Hare in a message that at least both Rusk and Bundy had read earlier that day.
125. Robert Kennedy to Rusk, 30 October 1962, President's Office Files, JFKL (emphasis added). Kennedy's account in this memo (declassified in 1991) is substantively identical to the report of the talk sent back to Moscow that night by Dobrynin. *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 5 (Spring 1995), pp. 79–80. On the circumstances that prompted Kennedy to write the note to Rusk, see Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), pp. 522–23. Schlesinger quotes some of Kennedy's handwritten notes on the matter, also accurately describing the substance of the discussion on Turkish missiles. Since the memo does not appear in Rusk's files, and the original is in the JFKL in the President's Office Files, it is possible that Robert Kennedy drafted the memo to Rusk, showed it to his brother, and that the president then kept the memo in his files, so that it was never sent to Rusk.
126. Despite Robert Kennedy's warning that the U.S. "would have to make decisions within the next 12 or possible 24 hours" and that "this matter could not wait and that he had better contact Mr. Khrushchev and have a commitment from him by the next day," Dobrynin conveyed this message through normal channels, which require about 8 hours, rather than using the phone. When questioned on this decision, Dobrynin explained, "We had no custom or precedent for sending phone calls." Interview with Allison, November 6, 1998.
127. Alexeev to Foreign Ministry, 25 October 1962; Castro to Khrushchev, 26 October 1962, both in CWIHP/Harvard collection; Gribkov, "The View from Moscow and Havana," p. 63.
128. Alexeev to Foreign Ministry, 27 October 1962, in CWIHP/Harvard Collection. Alexeev's report was oddly ambiguous in describing whether Soviets or Cubans had shot down the U-2.
129. Khrushchev to Castro, 30 October 1962, in released correspondence at JFKL; Gribkov, "The View from Moscow and Havana," p. 63.
130. Fursenko & Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble," p. 282.
131. "Dobrynin's cable to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, October 27, 1962," *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 5 (Spring 1995), pp. 79–80, reprinted in *Fourteen Days in October: The Cuban Missile Crisis* on Operations Center Website, <http://tqd.advanced.org>.
132. Fursenko and Naftali, p. 286.
133. See *ibid.*; Foreign Ministry to Washington (handwritten by Gromyko in Soviet archives), 28 October 1962, in *CWIHP Bulletin*, Issue 5 (Spring 1995), p. 76; Fursenko and Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble," p. 284.
134. Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, p. 523. Dobrynin's account of this unpleasant meeting was different. He reported to Moscow that Robert Kennedy had refused to accept such a letter with the claim that it "could cause irreparable harm to my political career in the future." Dobrynin to Foreign Ministry, 30 October 1962, CWIHP/Harvard Collection.
135. The letter was declassified in 1992 and is available at the John F. Kennedy Library.
136. USUN New York 1585, 1 November 1962, reprinted in Chang and Kornbluh, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 1962, pp. 249–51.
137. See, for example, Martin to Alexis Johnson, "Invasion," 30 October 1962; Ball through Bundy to President Kennedy, "Suggested Policy Line for Cuban Crisis," 10 November 1962; the State briefing papers for the November 20 press conference; and President Kennedy's explanation on this point to Mikoyan in the Memorandum of Conversation for their meeting, 29 November 1962, all in Cuban Missile Crisis Files, 1992 Releases Box, National Security Archive.
138. See Bromley Smith to File, "Summary Record of Executive Committee Meeting No. 27," 19 November 1962, in National Security Files, Box 316, Executive Committee Meetings, vol. III, Meetings 25–32a, JFKL; and Gromyko to Mikoyan (then in Havana), 18 November 1962, CWIHP/Harvard Collection.
139. See Ankara 619, 13 November 1962, National Archives, Decimal Files, 782.56311/11-1362; Deptel 1151, "Jupiter Missiles," 18 December 1962, in *FRUS 1961–1963: West Europe and Canada*, vol. 13, pp. 460–61. On the "intolerable serenity" see Paris Secto 22 (Eyes Only from Rusk to President Kennedy and Ball), 15 December 1962, in *ibid.*, pp. 458–59.